

Contraceptive Awareness in Manisa Region

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OBJECTIVE: To investigate the awareness on contraception in Manisa Region.

STUDY DESIGN: Between January and March 2003, a survey was performed on 303 women in outpatient gynecology clinic, Celal Bayar University Hospital. Questionnaire was consisted of 17 questions including educational status, smoking, and the choice of contraceptive methods, from where they learnt the contraceptive methods, if so, what is the main objection against oral contraceptive pills, and what types of modern contraceptive methods they know.

RESULTS: Of 303 women, 130 (42.9%) are graduated from primary school, 92 (30%) from high school, and 81 (26.7%) from university. Of all surveyed, 112 (37%) have got the contraception information from health providers, 68 (22.4%) from books, and 123 (40.6%) from their partners and friends. Smoking rate was as high as 50.2%. The commonly preferred contraceptive methods were IUD (intrauterine device), condom and oral contraceptive pills, respectively 25.4%, 12.5% and 9.2%. IUD (intrauterine device) was chosen as the most reliable contraceptive method (38.3%), whereas oral contraceptive pills were believed as the most harmful contraceptive method. Weight gain and irritability were sited as the most important side effects of oral contraceptive pills.

CONCLUSIONS: According to these results, people still need to be informed on contraception as health care providers, we should more and correct information to the couples.

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Key Words: Contraception, Side effect, Safety

Women have been faced with the risk of childbearing for a long time from puberty until perimenopause. However, effective control of reproduction is essential for women to accomplish individual goals in contemporary lifestyle. The control of fertility is much more important now than before, because not only sexually transmitted diseases are more common in the world, but also the population has been increasing dramatically. If the increasing rate of this much were continued, the population of the world would be double in 40 years, therefore effective control of reproduction is basic requirement to prevent both pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.¹ There are lots of options that can be chosen for contraception. For women, more than 35 years of age, sterilization is one choice. For younger couples, oral contraceptive pills are the most frequently used method, and the condom ranks second in U.S. The oral contraceptive pills are also one of the most popular methods in all over the world; approximately one-quarter of women between 15 and 50 years of age use oral contraceptives.² Latex condoms are both an important contraceptive method and an effective strategy in preventing sexually transmitted diseases. Intrauterine devices (IUDs) have become widely used since their

introduction. Intrauterine device (IUD) remains the mainstay of family planning measures in developing countries but is associated with some serious complications like bleeding, perforation and migration to adjacent organs or omentum. Thus, proper training of paramedical staff is mandatory in developing countries to provide safe and better family planning services.³

The aim of this study was to investigate the choice of contraceptive methods, how they learnt the contraceptive methods, their knowledge about safety and side effects of contraceptive methods among women in outpatient gynecology clinic, Celal Bayar University Hospital, in January and March 2003.

Materials and Methods

A survey was performed on 303 women from different cultural backgrounds, in outpatient gynecology clinic, Celal Bayar University Hospital, between January and March 2003. The mean and median ages were 39.5 and 42, respectively (range 17-64 ages). They were asked to answer a questionnaire which was consisted of 17 questions including educational status, smoking, their choice of contraceptive methods, how they learnt the contraceptive methods, if so, what the main objection against oral contraceptive pills is, and what types of modern contraceptive methods they know. Marital status of the people who answered this question were not taken into consideration.

Results

Of 303 women surveyed, 130 (42.9%) were from primary school, 92 (30.4%) from high school and 81 (26.7%)

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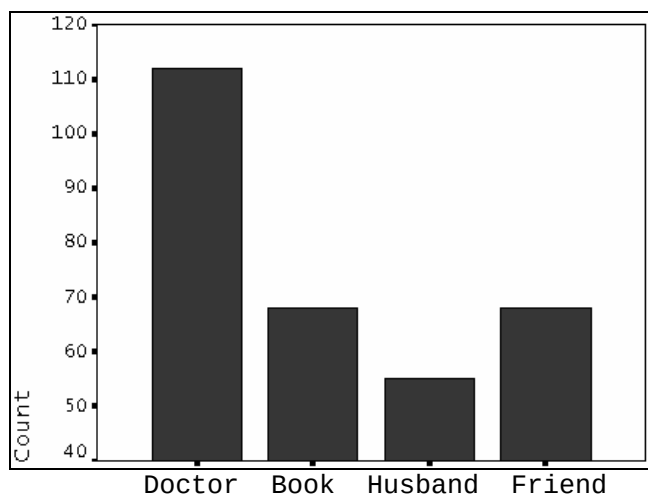
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from university. 255 (84.2%) of 303 women were in their reproductive ages and 48 (15.8%) were postmenopausal. Smoking rate of surveyed population was 50.2%. Variables and the number of cases are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Variables and the number of cases

Variable	The number of cases
Age (years)	39.54 (17-64 ages)
Smoking	152 (50.2%)
Educational status	130 (42.9%) primary school
	92 (30.4%) high school
	81 (26.7%) university
Women in reproductive ages	255 (84.2%)

Among all only 112 (37%) of women reported that they have got their contraceptive knowledge from health care providers, 68 (22.4%) from books, 55 (18.2%) from their husbands and 68 (22.4%) from their friends (Graphic I).



Graphic I. Count of cases according to knowledge sources

When we rank the contraceptive methods chosen in decreasing order, intrauterine device (IUD) was the first followed by condom, oral contraceptive pill as 25.4%, 12.5% and 9.2% respectively. Coitus interruptus was preferred only in 6.9% of women whereas sterilization was the least preferred method (3%). When we consider the reliability of the method, IUD (intrauterine device) was defined as the most reliable method (38.3%) while oral contraceptive pills was the second most reliable. When it comes to the side effects, oral contraceptive pill was believed the most harmful and dangerous contraceptive method by almost all women. Only one woman reported the intrauterine device (IUD) as the most harmful contraceptive method. Contraceptive methods and rates of preference and safety and side effects are noted in Table 2.

Weight gain and irritability were reported as the most important side effects of oral contraceptive pills. Nausea, vomiting, sleeplessness and change in appetite were also defi-

ned as the side effects attributed to oral contraceptive pills. Subcutaneous implants and monthly injections were sited as the most popular new methods among modern contraceptive methods.

Discussion

According to our results, contraceptive knowledge has been learned from husbands or friends at a rate of 48.6% among women. In this study, more than 40% of women have never used a contraceptive method. This percentage is quite low when we compare with the developed countries. Nevertheless in one study in 2002, among 10.683 US women, 46% not use any contraceptive method by then.⁴ However we believe that this is a selected population since all of these women were admitted for unwanted pregnancy and desire for dilatation and curettage. In our study all women reflect the general population. This shows that our women need more information on contraception.

IUD was believed as the most reliable and most preferred contraceptive method. There is a role of well-introduction of IUD in primary health services. Today, injections or implantable rods and hormone-releasing intrauterine devices are also widely available. In this study subcutaneous implants and monthly injections are modern contraceptive methods that are known mostly among all women. This shows that health workers have succeeded in their objects.

High rate of smoking and afraid of its side effects lead to the avoidance of oral contraceptive pills. Oral contraceptive pills have important benefits. Oral contraceptive use has produced a reduction of risk for endometrial and ovarian cancer. A 50% reduction of hospitalization for pelvic infection has been reported.⁵ Other benefits include a significant reduction for benign breast diseases, as well as reduction in surgery for ovarian cysts, dysmenorrhea, and anemia from menstrual blood loss. Contemporary low dose pills are highly effective and also have fewer side effects. Therefore oral contraceptive pill use should be recommended strongly if they do not smoke. As can be seen from these results, oral contraceptive pills need a better introduction as the safest way of these methods.

Women need accurate information about fertility cycles and about the risk of pregnancy when a contraceptive is not used or is used imperfectly. Because high rate of unprotected intercourse can cause unintended pregnancies which end up with abortion and such a situation may cause a big medical and social problems. The main sources of family planning information were TV/radio, followed by friends and newspapers/magazines. In order to encourage women's involvement in family planning, the use of mass media and continual training programs, could be very useful particularly in developing countries, where contraceptive goals have not been reached.

Table 2. Contraceptive methods and rates of preference and safety and side effects

	IUD	OCP	Condom	Sterilization	C.interruptus
Use	77 (25.4%)	28 (9.2%)	38 (12.5%)	9 (3 %)	21 (6.9 %)
Safety	107 (35.3%)	40 (13.2%)	21 (6.9%)	24 (7.9 %)	-
Side effect	1	302			

In conclusion, this study shows that the contraceptive awareness in our region is not satisfactory, thus as healthcare workers we should provide much more information to the population and also train them for family planning.

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