

Research Article**Awareness of Emergency Contraception among Nursing Students****Kaveri S. B^{1*}, Jaya V. Suryawanshi²**¹Mrs Giridhar Lal Maternity Hospital, Municipal Corporation, Delhi-110006, India²Department of Community Medicine, Maharashtra Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Latur-413 531, Maharashtra, India***Corresponding author**

Kaveri S. B

Email: tegn@rediffmail.com

Abstract: Overpopulation in India is the burning problem. It is a major cause of poverty, illiteracy, decrease economy growth, starvation, malnutrition, depletion natural resources. The maternal mortality due to unsafe abortions is 8%. In India, 78% conceptions each year are unplanned and 25% are unwanted. The number of abortions is over 11 million per year, of which 6.7 million are induced. This was a questionnaire based study conducted in a tertiary care hospital in May 2014. Nursing students those who have completed first year were included in the study. The study was approved by the institutional ethics committee and verbal consent was taken from the participants. A score of one was given for each correct response and zero for each wrong response. A total of 168 students participated in the study. In our study only 41% were aware of methods of Emergency Contraception (EC). Other studies have reported 35% and 88% of the students were aware of other methods of EC. In the present study, only 37.55 students knew the mechanism of action of EC. 48.8% of the students opined that EC prevents sexually transmitted diseases. Highest percentage of positive attitude was towards paramedical staff dispensing EC (70.8%) and awareness programs to be promoted by the government (66.6%). 57% felt that purchasing of EC from OTC will be embarrassing. The most common source was from the doctors and television. Workshop/seminar accounted for only 32%. This study suggested that nursing students had overall positive attitude toward EC, but lacked correct knowledge. Health providers were important sources of information of EC. Nurses with a good knowledge and positive attitude towards EC can act as effective counselors to the public creating awareness and to improve their understanding and change their attitude towards EC.

Keywords: Emergency contraception, Nursing students, KAP, Abortion.

INTRODUCTION

Overpopulation in India is the burning problem. It is a major cause of poverty, illiteracy, decrease economy growth, starvation, malnutrition, depletion natural resources [1]. The maternal mortality due to unsafe abortions is 8% [2]. Most of these induced abortions are due to unwanted pregnancies. Practice of contraception helps to reduce the incidence of abortions but the estimated couple protection rate is only 40.4% [3]. Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) are available since 1960s [4]. But service delivery protocol was not standardized. Many providers did not know about this method and access has been limited.

In India, 78% conceptions each year are unplanned and 25% are unwanted [5]. The number of abortions is over 11 million per year, of which 6.7 million are induced. There are 10-11 illegal abortions for each legal abortion accounting for 15,000 to 20,000 abortion-related deaths annually and a high associated morbidity, almost all of those is preventable [6]. According to the new estimates, worldwide abortion rates are almost similar in both developing and

developed world; however, unsafe abortions are dominating in developing countries [7]. The most important factor to prevent unplanned or mistimed pregnancies is to improve the knowledge and awareness about use of contraception.

The popular emergency contraception (EC) methods approved by the Government are the Yuzpe regimen [8].

Nursing personnel are an integral part of any health care system. The knowledge and attitude of nursing personnel towards contraception can influence the community. Hence the present study was done to know the knowledge and attitude towards emergency contraception.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a questionnaire based study conducted in a tertiary care hospital in May 2014. Nursing students those who have completed first year were included in the study. The study was approved by

the institutional ethics committee and verbal consent was taken from the participants.

A pre-validated, pre-tested questionnaire was given to the participants. The questionnaire was constructed to assess knowledge and attitudes about EC, based upon a review of literature and similar studies conducted. Some questions were objective in nature with 'yes' or 'no' options whereas a few questions were

multiple-choice. A score of one was given for each correct response and zero for each wrong response. The data was recorded in MS Excel (2010 version) and the results are explained in frequency and percentage.

RESULTS

A total of 168 students participated in the study. The knowledge and attitude of the students towards EC is shown in table 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1: Response regarding knowledge of emergency contraception

Statement	Correct response	Incorrect response
Indication for EC	95 (56.5%)	73 (43.4%)
Appropriate time of taking	77 (45.8%)	91 (54.1%)
No of tablets to be taken	92 (54.7%)	76 (45.2%)
Common side effect	68 (49.4%)	100 (51.6%)
Interval for repeat dose	54 (32.1%)	104 (67.9%)
Contraindication to EC	103 (61.3%)	65 (38.7%)
Availability of EC as OTC drug	122 (72.6%)	46 (27.4%)
Mechanism of action	63 (37.5%)	105 (62.5%)
Methods of EC (pills, IUCD, LNG)	69 (41%)	99 (58.9%)
EC available for free of cost at government centres	45 (26.7%)	123 (73.3%)
EC protects against STDs	82 (48.8%)	86 (51.2%)
EC can be used regularly	110 (65.4%)	58 (34.6%)

OTC=Over the counter drugs, IUCD=Intra-uterine contraceptive device, LNG=Levo-norgestrol, STDs =Sexually transmitted diseases

Table 2: Response regarding attitude towards emergency contraception

Statement	Positive	Negative	Don't know
EC is safe for its users	92 (54.7%)	43 (25.5%)	33 (19.6%)
Should paramedical staff dispense EC	119 (70.8%)	23 (13.6%)	26 (15.4%)
EC would discourage consistent use of condom	86 (51.1%)	42 (25%)	40 (23.8%)
Will recommend EC to others	77 (45.8%)	63 (37.5%)	28 (16.6%)
Using EC is better than abortion	82 (48.8%)	33 (19.6%)	53 (31.5%)
Purchase of EC as OTC will be embarrassing	96 (57.1%)	46 (27.3%)	26 (15.4%)
EC is good for reproductive health	66 (39.2%)	87 (51.7%)	15 (8.9%)
Awareness programmes to be promoted by government	112 (66.6%)	11 (6.5%)	45 (26.7%)
EC will discourage regular use of contraception	59 (35.1%)	77 (45.8%)	32 (19%)

Table 3: Sources of information about emergency contraception

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Media/Newspaper	56	33.3
Friends	73	43.4
Doctor	95	56.5
Textbook	77	45.8
Workshop/seminar	54	32.1
Television	92	54.7
Pharmacy	48	28.5

DISCUSSION

The family planning program was launched in India 1952 with the objective of reducing birth rate [9]. Family Welfare Department of India has introduced temporary methods (e.g. Oral contraceptive pills, condom, IUCD, hormonal injections) and permanent methods (like tubectomy, vasectomy) of contraception [10]. This study demonstrated a low level of knowledge and attitude of emergency contraception among the nursing students. The finding is similar to other studies conducted in India and abroad [11-14].

In our study only 41% were aware of methods of EC. Other studies have reported 35% and 88% of the students were aware of other methods of EC [12, 15]. In the present study, only 37.55 students knew the mechanism of action of EC. A study on nursing students showed that 25.5% thought that EC acts as an abortifacient [16]. 48.8% of the students opined that EC prevents STDs. Other study has reported that 52.14% were not sure whether EC prevents against STD [16]. In the present study 61% knew the contraindication to EC was confirmed pregnancy. Other study reported that only 7.7% knew that it should not be given to those with confirmed pregnancy [17].

The attitude towards EC is shown in table 2. Highest percentage of positive attitude was towards paramedical staff dispensing EC (70.8%) and awareness programs to be promoted by the government (66.6%). 57% felt that purchasing of EC from OTC will be embarrassing. This shows that the student are not in favor of its availability as an OTC.

The possible reason may be its misuse by younger generation and it would encourage unsafe sexual relationship [18]. The availability with prescription would help to have more reliable and wanted contraception.

The various sources of information about EC is shown in table 3. The most common source was from the doctors and television. Workshop/seminar accounted for only 32%. This shows that we need to adopt an aggressive promotional and educative

approach to make students aware of EC to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

National Demographic and Health survey shows that only 1% of married women had ever used EC and less than 1/3rd of unmarried women knew about EC [19]. Along with mass media, health care providers can play an important part in the promotion of the use of EC as an effective and safe method to prevent pregnancy [15].

Limitations of the study

The present study has some limitations. The sample size was small and we did not have another group to compare. Future studies should include medical, nursing and other paramedical students with large sample size.

CONCLUSION

This study suggested that nursing students had overall positive attitude toward EC, but lacked correct knowledge. Health providers were important sources of information of EC. Nurses with a complete knowledge and positive attitude towards EC can act as effective counsellors to the public to create awareness, improve their understanding and change their attitude towards EC. Health education should be strengthening by conducting regular workshop/seminar to improve the knowledge and attitude towards EC.

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