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Research article

A STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF NURSING STUDENTS TOWARDS EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Out of 210 million pregnancies in the world each year, 75 million pregnancies are unintended and/or not planned. Most of these unplanned/ unintended pregnancies are not carried to full term, but aborted often in unhygienic conditions leading to serious consequences. Mortality and morbidity related to abortion can be significantly reduced by the use of emergency contraceptive. **Materials and methods:** A present cross-sectional study was carried out among 140 nursing students of the first and second year studying at Katuri College of Nursing, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, by a convenient sample method over a period of 4 months from March 2010 to June 2010. **Results:** In the present study, 100% of the respondents were aware about EC. The majority (93.4%) of the respondents were unmarried. Regarding knowledge of nursing students, only 55.71% students give the correct response to ideal clients for EC. Only 51.43% students give the correct response to the methods of EC. Only 57.86% students give the correct response for maximum acceptable time after sex for a woman to take EC. 65% students don't know about common side effect of EC. Regarding attitude of nursing students towards EC, 65% students were of opinion that paramedical staff should dispense EC. **Conclusion:** This study suggested that participants had overall positive attitude toward EC but there was a lack of knowledge regarding the effectiveness, mechanism of protection from RTI/STDs. So, there is a need to further educate them about EC.

Key words: Attitude, Nursing students, Emergency contraception

INTRODUCTION

Out of 210 million pregnancies in the world each year, 75 million pregnancies are unintended and/or not planned^{1,2}. Most of these unplanned/ unintended pregnancies are not carried to full term, but aborted often in unhygienic conditions leading to serious consequences. One of the highest risk groups for unsafe abortion is young

and unmarried women. Mortality and morbidity related to abortion can be significantly reduced by the use of emergency contraceptive.

Adolescent pregnancy is one of the serious social and public health problems in India. Young woman fail's to complete her education due to early childbearing and due to this responsibility

they have less job prospects and this will ultimately affect both mothers and child economic well-being. School drop-out rate was more in adolescent females in India who gave birth before their fourth year of secondary school ^{3,4}.

After an unprotected act of sexual intercourse, use of EC is one of the effective methods to prevent pregnancy also called "morning-after" or postcoital" pills. However, since emergency contraceptive pills can be used up to three days after unprotected intercourse, it should be used only during emergencies .It should not be used as a regular contraception. It has a failure rate of 0.2 % to 3%. At present the progesterone –only tablet available in the market for post –coital contraception is LNG ⁵. Most of the studies on EC in India have been done among a group of adult married women. Very few studies have been done among nursing students. As the nursing students are the future community health educators and health providers. With this in mind, the present study was conducted to explore knowledge of and attitude about EC among nursing students of Katuri College of Nursing, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A present cross-sectional study was carried out among 140 nursing students of the first and

second year studying at Katuri College of Nursing, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, by a convenient sample method over a period of 4 months from March 2010 to June 2010. Consent form taken from each student. A pre-designed, pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire in English was devised to collect data. The data was collected, analyzed and presented in SPSS 10.

RESULTS

In the present study,100% of the respondents were aware about EC. Majority (93.4%) of the respondents were unmarried. Regarding knowledge of nursing students, only 55.71% students give the correct response to ideal clients for EC. Only 51.43% students give the correct response to the methods of EC. Only 57.86% students give the correct response for maximum acceptable time after sex for a women to take EC. 65% students don't know about common side effect of EC. Only 31.43% students give correct response regarding availability of EC at Government centers free of cost.

Regarding attitude of nursing students towards EC, 65% students were of opinion that paramedical staff should dispense EC.38.57% students were of opinion that EC was good for reproductive health.34.29% students were of opinion that EC would discourage consistent use of condom.

Table 1: Knowledge about emergency contraception among study population

Question of knowledge	Correct response (%)	Incorrect response (%)
Who would be the ideal clients for EC?	78(55.71)	62(44.29)
What are the methods of EC?	72(51.43)	68(48.57)
Maximum acceptable time after sex for women to take EC?	81(57.86)	59(42.14)
Is EC procured easily from retail outlets?	64(45.71)	76(54.29)
Is menstrual irregularity is the most common side effect of EC?	49(35)	91(65)
Is EC provided protection from STD/RTIs?	67(47.86)	73(52.14)
Is efficacy of EC reducing by each passing hour?	69(49.29)	71(50.71)
Are EC available for free of cost at govt centres?	44(31.43)	96(68.57)

Table 2: Attitude of study population about emergency contraception

Question of attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)
Should paramedical staff dispense EC?	91(65)	49(35)
Is EC good for reproductive health?	54(38.57)	86(61.43)
Is EC would discourage consistent use of condom	48(34.29)	92(65.71)
Is EC safe for its users?	86(61.43)	54(38.57)

DISCUSSION

The rates of unplanned and/or unintended pregnancies and illegal abortions are high in India despite the fact that India was the first country to start a National Family Welfare Programme. In India, 78% pregnancies are not planned by the couple and 25% are unwanted⁶. Despite the legalization of abortion in India through MTP Act 1971, the no of illegal abortions are increasing. In the present study. All the students were aware about EC. This was in contrast to the level of awareness found among university students in Ghana (43.2%)⁷. It was higher than among university students in the USA(86%) and Jamaica (84%)^{8,9}.

In the present study, about one-fourth of the respondents (25.5%) thought EC is an abortifacient, compared to 25.8% of university students in Ghana, 51.2% of university students in Cameroon, 49% of nursing students in Kenya, 25% of doctors in the Pakistan, and 8.1% of doctors in Delhi^(7,10-13). 35% of the respondents correctly chose menstrual irregularity being most common side-effect. Abdulghani et al¹² in their study find 57.86% knowledge about the correct time for taking ECPs after unprotected sex. This finding is higher than 11.3% reported in Ghana,⁷ and 5.7% reported in the Cameroon study¹⁰. In our study, 28.9% respondents did not have an accurate knowledge of the mechanism of action of an EC. Singh et al¹³ in their study find similar findings. 52.14% were not sure whether ECs protect from sexually transmitted diseases/reproductive tract infections (STDs/RTIs). This was similar to in a study done

by Parey et al¹² who showed that 94.8% were not sure whether ECs protect from STDs/RTIs. In the present study, most of the study participants think that ECPs were safe for their users. Other authors^{7,8,13} also reported similar findings. About 34.29% participants thought providing ECPs would discourage the consistent use of condoms compared to 53.4% of students in Ghana⁷ and 38.4% of university students in Cameroon⁸. Participants agreed that EC should be sold only on prescription and about 35% discouraged its distribution by paramedical staff. Singh et al¹¹ in his study revealed that 65% of doctors agreed that EC should be sold only on prescription and more than half discouraged its distribution by paramedical staff. The majority (61.43%) of the respondents did not agree that EC is good for women's reproductive health. Similarly, a study done by Parey et al¹⁴ also found that 75.8% of the participants thought that ECs were harmful to the body.

CONCLUSION

The study suggested that participants had an overall positive attitude toward EC but there was a lack of knowledge regarding the effectiveness, mechanism of protection from RTI/STDs. So, there is a need to further educate them about EC. The medical curriculum must be updated regularly about the new methods of contraceptives so that the community at large gets benefited.

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