

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Knowledge about Emergency Contraceptive Pills Among Women Attending OPD of Tertiary Care Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Background: Unintended pregnancy is one among social problems in every country in this era. Emergency contraceptive pills are used for avoidance of pregnancy after unprotected coitus in a woman who is not using any regular method of contraception. The aim of this cross-sectional study was to ascertain the knowledge about emergency contraception among women attending OPD of Social Security teaching hospital, Multan Road, Lahore.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out in OPD of Gynaecology Department, Social Security Teaching Hospital, Multan Road Lahore from 1st May 2023 to 31st October 2023. A total of 350 women were enrolled. Knowledge of emergency contraceptive pills such as dose, correct timing of administration, efficacy and side effects were noted. Adequacy of knowledge was considered if 4 or more questions were answered correctly.

Results: Mean age of the women was 20.9±1.7 12% had parity 0-1, 25.4% had parity 2-4 and 62.6% had parity 5-7. About 10.5% of women showed adequate knowledge of emergency contraceptive pills (ECP).

Conclusion: Most of women lack the knowledge about emergency contraceptive pills, whereas some women had misunderstanding regarding their use.

Keywords: Emergency contraception, Unwanted pregnancy, Family planning

INTRODUCTION

Unplanned pregnancy poses the major challenges to physical, mental and social health of women of reproductive age group in developing countries¹. It is estimated that in Pakistan, 89,000 induced miscarriages are carried out yearly with estimated annual miscarriage rate of 29 per 1000 women who belongs to age group of 15 yrs-49 yrs. The miscarriage rate is identified to be higher in areas with lower contraception rate and higher unwanted childbearing. The unplanned pregnancy rate is considered to be 77 per 1000 women. Induced abortions are carried out for termination of I in 7 pregnancies. Approximately, 197,000 women are treated yearly in government hospitals and private teaching hospitals for management of complications of induced miscarriage leading to an annual rate of 6.4 women hospitalized due to unsafe induced abortion per 1000 women aged 15-49 years². Maternal morbidity and mortality rate in Pakistan can be lessened by use of emergency contraceptive pills leading to decrease number of unplanned pregnancies. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), one in three of direct maternal deaths can be avoided if women want to use contraception have access to it³.

There is a real need to educate the women about different contraceptive methods like emergency contraceptive pills to avoid unplanned pregnancy and ill effects of termination of unplanned pregnancy⁴. According to a local study conducted among 400 women attending teaching hospital of Karachi, 88% women were not acquainted with concept of emergency contraception. Only 40% of women knew about the correct timing of post-coital contraception and 36% women were reluctant to use emergency contraceptive pills due to religious reasons⁵. In a study conducted in India on 623 women more than 99% of respondents knew about most of the methods of contraception whereas 5.9 of respondents and knew about emergency contraception and none of them had ever used it⁶.

The aim of this cross-sectional study was to ascertain the knowledge of emergency contraceptive pills among women of reproductive age group so that different strategies and plans could be made at national level to create awareness about ECP so that rate of induced miscarriage could be lowered due to unwanted pregnancies⁷.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

It was a cross-sectional study carried out in OPD of Gynecology department, Social Security Teaching Hospital, Multan Road, Lahore from 1st May 2023 to 31st October 2023. A sample size of 350 women was calculated with 95% confidence level, 2.5% margin of error and taking expected percentage of adequate knowledge of emergency contraception of 5.9% among women presenting in OPD of Social Security Teaching Hospital, Multan Road, Lahore. 350 women of reproductive age group (15-45 years) were included in this study who were attending outpatient department of Social Security Teaching Hospital, Multan Road Lahore for advice of contraception. Data was collected by interviewing the subjects using convenient sampling method. Questionnaire was designed which covered information about demographic features including age, education, knowledge of pill such as dose, correct timing of administration, efficacy side effects of ECP. Informed consent was obtained, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. Adequacy of knowledge was considered if a woman answered 4 or more questions correctly. The data was uploaded and evaluated in SPSS-20.

RESULTS

There were 97 (27.7%) patients were between 15-25 years old, 190 (54.3%) patients were between 26-35 years while 63 (18.0%) patients were 36-45 years with mean age was 20.9±1.7years (Table 1). 12% presented with parity 0-1, 25.4% had parity 2-4 and 62.6% had parity 5-7 (Table 2). Majority 68.6% were illiterate, 20% had primary education, 7.4% had middle education level and only 4% were graduate (Table-3). 10.5% women had adequate knowledge of emergency contraceptive pills (Table-4)

Table 1: Frequency of age (n=350)

Age (years)	No.	%
15-22	97	27.7
26-35	190	54.3
36-45	63	18.3

Table 2: Frequency of parity (n=350)

Parity	No.	%
0 – 1	42	12.0
2 – 4	89	25.4
5 – 7	219	62.6

Table 3: Frequency of education (n=350)

Education	No.	%
Nil	240	68.6

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Primary	70	20.0
Middle	26	7.4
Graduate	14	4.0

Table 4: Frequency of adequate knowledge (n=350)

Adequate Knowledge	No.	%
Yes	37	10.5
No	313	89.5

DISCUSSION

Emergency contraception defines as any device or drug that is used to avoid pregnancy after unprotected coitus⁴. The risk of unplanned pregnancy can be lessened by 75-89% if emergency Contraceptive pills are taken within 72 hours of unprotected coitus⁵⁻⁷. Emergency contraceptive pills are available in two forms: (a) Lvonorgestral 0.75 mg, a progesterone only pill and (b) combined oral contraceptive pills in slightly higher doses [8]. Its mechanism of action involves ovulation inhibition or failed implantation of fertilized egg, however it does not affects the established pregnancy⁹. In addition to unprotected coitus, indications of emergency contraceptive pills include failure of barrier methods like condoms. Use of emergency contraceptive pills are essentially relied on women as their use and success rates are dependent on knowledge and awareness and availability of emergency contraceptive pills to women.

The efficacy of emergency contraceptive pill is relied on how early after unprotected coitus, the emergency contraceptive pills are taken by the woman so they must have prior knowledge, awareness of emergency contraceptive pills and easy access to them since these pills are effective when used within 72 hours of unprotected coitus⁹. Pakistan is amongst the most populous countries in South Asia and it lacks a substantial and sustained decline in fertility. In Pakistan, one in three currently married women is at risk of an unintended pregnancy¹⁰.

It is important that effective contraception should be used to prevent unwanted pregnancies rather than abortion. Reproductive health services can give a chance to these women to improve their quality of life and reduce maternal mortality and morbidity¹¹. Emergency contraceptive pills are available in most of the developing countries. Government of Pakistan is also making policies to improve reproductive health of women and now emergency contraceptive pills frequently available in the market but still many women have never heard of it.

In the present study, the knowledge of emergency contraceptive was quite low (10.5%) as demonstrated in studies of other developing countries including South Africa¹⁰, India¹², Nepal¹³ and Mexico¹⁴. The lack of knowledge regarding Emergency contraceptive pills among Pakistani women and Indian women is similar because of similarities in their culture, their educational status and lifestyles^{15,16}. In a study conducted in Kuwait, only 6.1% women had heard of emergency contraception as compared to other Muslim countries^{17,18}. In Islamic countries and South East Asia, knowledge of emergency contraceptive pills is low when compared with Europe and North America^{19,20}. The results of our study are also consistent with previous studies that majority of women have low level of knowledge about post coital contraception^{21,22}.

Few of the respondents in this study knew that emergency contraceptive pill have to be used within 72 hours after unprotected coitus. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Mula²³. The women with knowledge on contraception and how to use the pill and its side effect had significant positive relation with acceptance of emergency contraceptive pill. Since accurate knowledge about the pill creates positive attitude and subsequently leading to acceptance and realizing the benefit of the pill, they thus seek more information about it. This is consistent with reports of Harper and Ellerton that acceptance of emergency contraceptive pill had much association with the knowledge about side effect of the pill²⁴.

In a study by Lee et al²⁵ among women attending abortion clinics in Hong Kong, younger age women had more knowledge

about this method than those older ages since female adolescents may have received information from friends or through printed media and from studying sex education in school.

In the present study, it was noted that some women had misconception that using the pill was against ethical value as it causes abortion. Some countries like Malaysia a number of people believed that this pill covers induced abortion, so it was not used in family planning clinic, and thus health personnel would not mention about the pill²⁶. However Goldenring believed that emergency contraceptive pill had no effect on abortion because its active mechanism is to inhibit ovulation²⁷. However, if pregnancy was considered occurring at the time of implantation, using emergency contraceptive pill would not induce abortion as implantation occurs 7 days after fertilization while emergency contraceptive pills used within 3 days after coitus²⁸.

Acceptance of emergency contraceptive pill is a sign if I can't issue that brings about positive attitude and correct use of the pill. This confirmed the concept of Dusex²⁹ and Sychareun et al⁷ that adolescents had different attitude on sexual relation. Males have more free attitude than that of females, while females were usually strict with religion and culture.

Although unplanned pregnancy and induced miscarriage data in developing countries is scarcely acquired, the World Health Organization (WHO) however, mentioned that there are around 70,000 maternal mortality caused by unsafe and illegal miscarriages and it is a leading cause of maternal mortality in women aged 15-45 in developing countries³⁰. Emergency contraceptive pill has advantage over other contraceptive methods (like combined pills, IUCD), that it can be used in ladies who do not want permanent method of contraception. It can also be used in women who have contraindications for other methods.

CONCLUSION

Women lack the knowledge on emergency contraceptive pill. Only 10.5% had adequate knowledge about the use of emergency contraceptive pills, while some had misunderstanding about its use and some women believed that emergency contraceptive pills might cause miscarriage. Therefore, giving adequate knowledge about emergency contraceptive pills is mandatory and should be done systematically, with an emphasis on precautionary measures. So women of reproductive age group would be capable of using emergency contraceptive pills when needed correctly and effectively.

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