Original Research Article

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Prevalence of self-reported gynaecological problems in a community of district Srinagar Kashmir valley

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ABSTRACT

Background: Gynaecological disorders are quite frequent in the community but still mortality is an indicator of maternal health. Treatment seeking behaviour depends upon the individual perceptions and attitudes towards health care.

Methods: A community based cross sectional study in which 419 eligible women in the age group of 15-45 were enrolled and interviewed for the study. A semi structured pretested questionnaire was used. The questionnaire included information about the socio demographic characteristics of the students. Data was analysed using percentages.

Results: The prevalence came out to be 20.28% which was percentage of women reporting one or more gynaecological disorders. 52.94% did not seek anywhere care or visited any health care facility.

Conclusions: The study found a good percentage of women who self-reported one or more gynaecological disorder, which prompts one to find out various factors associated with this problem.

Keywords: Gynaecological, Maternal health, Cross-sectional study

INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of WHO's definition of health, reproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life and gynaecological morbidity has been defined as any condition, disease or dysfunction of the reproductive system, which is not related to pregnancy, abortion, or childbirth but may be related to sexual behaviour. 1.2 Reproductive tract morbidities are one of the commonest reported disorders in women of child bearing age group. Reproductive tract infections are seen as a silent epidemic and are among the leading public health problems contributing significantly to the gynaecological morbidity and maternal mortality in India and other developing

countries of the world.³ Maternal and child health has been remained the agenda of concern for every country. The maternal health has been often related with maternal mortality only, paying little attention to reproductive morbidities. It has been estimated approximately 26-77% of women clinically observed to be suffering from one or morbidities.⁴ gynaecological Reproductive morbidities have a huge impact on women's social, economic and psychological factors. In our country married women are often reluctant to seek health care advice because of lack of privacy, lack of female doctor at the health facility, cost of treatment.⁵ Addressing these issues can lead to better reproductive health of women in the community. Community based information on prevalence of gynaecological morbidities is scarce in our part of country. Thus this study will provide an insight on this issue.

Objectives

- 1. To find out the percentage of women (15-45 age group) reporting gynaecological problem in the community.
- To find out treatment seeking behaviour of these women.

METHODS

It was a community based cross sectional study carried in health block of Hazratbal which is field practice area of Department of Community Medicine, Government Medical College Srinagar. The study was conducted from June 2014 to August 2014. The sample size calculated was derived from taking anticipated prevalence from a previous study done by ICMR in Jammu district.⁶

Taking p=14.8%, q=1-p, d=3.5% (allowable error) and 10% non-response. The sample size calculated was 419. Multistage sampling was used by taking 1 Primary health center area randomly in first stage which had a population of 11000 approximately. Then at second stage 4 villages were taken. At third stage, in each village households were selected by systematic sampling. For selection of household first of all we calculated the sampling interval. First household was selected randomly then subsequent households were taken by adding sampling interval to that random number. All the eligible women that was, women in age group of 15-45, nonpregnant, non-lactating and who had not attained menopause in the household were enrolled and interviewed. Information on socio-demographic variables like age, education, type of family, marital status, religion, occupation and questions regarding gynaecological problems in last 1 month was collected using a semi structured pretested questionnaire.

The data was entered in Microsoft excel (2007) and analysis was done using percentages.

RESULTS

The study sample included 419 females in the age group of 15-45 years. Overall 20.28% reported one or more gynaecological complaint. 52.94% did not seek anywhere care or visited any health care facility.

It was observed that the commonest symptom reported was backache (14.5%), menstrual disorders (8.0%). None reported fever alone as a symptom. There was an increasing trend of gynaecological symptoms with increasing age. Also married women experienced more problems than unmarried.

Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of the participants (n=419).

Characteristics	N	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)		
15-24	80	19.09
25-34	165	39.37
35 and above	174	41.52
Marital status		
Never married	42	10.02
Ever married	377	89.97
Literacy level		
Illiterate	101	24.10
<10 years of education	230	54.90
>10 years of education	88	21.00
Occupation		
Home makers	245	58.47
Students	65	15.51
Employees	43	10.26
Skilled workers	40	9.55
None	26	6.21

Table 2: Percentage of different reported gynaecological symptoms (n=85).

Symptoms	Percentage (%)
Backache	52.94
Menstrual disorders	45.88
Lower abdominal pain	41.17
Vaginal discharge	35.29
Burning sensation during urination	23.52
Increased frequency of urination	21.17
Itching in the genital areas	9.41
Infertility	3.52
Fever with chills	2.35

Table 3: Treatment seeking behaviour among the respondents.

Multiple responses		
Type of facility	N	Percentage (%)
Allopathic health facility/ private practitioner	21	24.7
Local paramedics or chemist	12	14.11
ISM (Unani, ayurveda)	7	8.23
Faith healer	5	5.88

DISCUSSION

Reproductive morbidities take a huge toll on women's health and our country is too affected by this problem. The findings of this study proved that there is a huge burden of gynaecological symptoms in our community too. The study included 419 women in the age group of 15-45 that is also the reproductive age group. This study gave a true picture regarding prevalence based on

community settings and service seeking behaviour among this vulnerable age group. Overall 20.28% reported one or more gynaecological symptoms. Many studies in India has shown a varied prevalence of these morbidities 7.One study done by ICMR in 23 districts of India reported a varied prevalence between 3.5-58.9%. The variations found between self-reporting and at a clinical setting has been very high. Studies have shown about three to four times more women reporting their problems when examined by a gynaecologist.7-9 But assessing on symptoms only in field settings is cost effective as we live in resource poor countries. The first contact point of women with the health system is a subcenter and this study instils a need to raise the awareness of women to use this health care level for their problems. In depth qualitative studies assessing the attitudes and behaviours of this group for not seeking treatment can put an impetus for improving services at the primary care levels. An appropriate, effective and efficient laboratory support at the primary health center will augur well with such conditions and this is the need of the hour. 14.11% of women went to a local chemist for treatment in which the quality of care is lacking. Various studies also showed a good percentage visiting alternative health care. 10 The decision for visiting local chemists may be due to the reason that it is accessible and care given free of cost.

CONCLUSION

This study found a high burden of gynaecological disorders which has a great impact on women's health. A sound knowledge in the community can lead a better decision making regarding seeking of health care.

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