

Original Research Article

Knowledge and practice regarding the use of emergency contraception among the higher secondary students of Nepal

Ramesh Bhatta^{1*}, Susmita Godar¹, Kabita Aryal²

¹Yeti Health Science Academy, Purbanchal University Nepal

²Ministry of Health and population, Nepal

Received: 10 April 2019

Accepted: 17 May 2019

*Correspondence:

Mr. Ramesh Bhatta,

E-mail: rameshcare@yahoo.com

Copyright: © the author(s), publisher and licensee Medip Academy. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT

Background: Emergency contraception or post coital contraception refers to methods of contraception that can be used to prevent pregnancy after sexual intercourse. Among the adolescents, premarital and unplanned sexual intercourse mostly result unintended pregnancy. In such conditions, emergency contraception is effective, safe and relatively inexpensive and can prevent pregnancies up to 95% if taken immediately or within 5 days after the sexual intercourse. Emergency contraception is available in pill form and IUD. Objective of this study was to assess the knowledge and practice of emergency contraception use among the higher secondary level students.

Methods: Study includes descriptive cross-sectional method with total 190 respondents who were selected through census method of sampling. Study data were collected through semi structured questionnaire and the data was analyzed by using the SPSS version 20.

Results: Mean age of the respondent was 17.8 years and 98.4% of them were unmarried. Among the total respondents only 63.7% of them have heard about the emergency contraception. About 14.2% of the respondents had experience sexual intercourse, out of those 51.8% have used emergency contraceptive method to prevent them from unintended pregnancies. Among those who had experience sexual intercourse, 22% of them got unintended pregnancies, which were managed through surgical abortion (83.3%) and medical abortion (16.7%).

Conclusions: Knowledge on proper use of emergency contraceptives can prevent unintended pregnancies that may occur among the adolescents due to premarital and unplanned sexual intercourse. However, only two third of respondents have heard about the emergency contraceptives. So it is important to raise awareness on emergency contraception and its rational use among the adolescents.

Keywords: Knowledge, Use, Emergency contraception, Unintended pregnancy, School students, Nepal

INTRODUCTION

Premarital and unplanned sexual activities are increasing among the adolescent population. In Nepal, study shows that 11% of women are sexually active before the age of 15 and about 51% experience sexual intercourse before the age of 18.¹ As the result, it increases the risk of unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.²

Unintended pregnancy remain as a major challenge among the adolescent's of developing countries that affect their reproductive health, so it is necessary to improve their knowledge and utilization of contraception. For preventing the chances of such unintended pregnancies, emergency contraception can be used after sexual intercourse.^{3,4} It is safe, effective, relatively inexpensive and can prevent pregnancies up to 95% if they are timely taken i.e. within 5 days.⁵⁻⁷ Emergency

contraception method includes copper-bearing intrauterine devices (IUDs) and the emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs).⁵ Under the emergency contraceptive pills, ulipristal acetate, levonorgestrel or combined oral contraceptives consisting of ethinyl estradiol plus levonorgestrel are the regimens recommended by the WHO.⁵

For the adolescents, emergency contraceptives could be beneficial if they are involved in sexual intercourse regularly or occasionally but do not use other contraceptive method.^{7,8} It could also be used when there is failure of barrier method due to spillage or breakage of condoms and in the condition of forced sex or rape.⁹

Study shows that about five million women and girls are treated each year due to the complications related with abortion at hospitals among them significant number of adolescents are also included.¹⁰ Though the abortion is legalized in Nepal but due to the various social restrictions, stigmas and taboos, still the abortion services are provided under highly risky and traditional methods.¹⁰ They also take abortion service from unauthorized health institutions where the untrained health workers are involved; such scenario creates more health threat among the adolescents

One of the major contributing factor that result into unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion is due to the lack of proper information and knowledge among the women on the different contraceptive methods including emergency contraceptive that are available in the market.¹¹ Due to lack of awareness on emergency contraception, women are not able to make informed contraceptive choice, hence it is necessary to aware and make its easy availability to support women to have better informed choices.¹² Another approach to increase knowledge and information on emergency contraception can be done by promoting reproductive health education.¹³

METHODS

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted among female students of class 11 and 12 studying in two government higher secondary school from April to May, 2018. The study site is located in peri-urban area of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal.

Total 190 female students were included in the study based on census sampling method. Questionnaires were distributed to each student and collected at the end of the day. Verbal consent was obtained from the student who participated in the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the research committee of the campus. Descriptive statistical analysis was used. All the relevant information was obtained from the respondents through self-administered questionnaires, and the data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 20.0, and presented in frequency tables.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic characteristic

Socio-demographic characteristic of the respondent shows that all the respondents belong to age group 16-20 years with the mean age of 17.8 years. Majority (54.2%) of the respondents were studying in grade 11 and 45.8% of them were in grade 12. Study respondents were studying under different faculties' i.e. education (64.7%), management (23.2%) and humanities (12.1%). Majorities (i.e. 98.4%) of the respondents were unmarried and most of them (i.e. 72.1%) follow the Hindu religion.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristic of respondents (n=190).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (mean age- 17.8 years)		
Below mean age	74	38.9
Above mean age	116	61.1
Grade		
Grade 11	103	54.2
Grade 12	87	45.8
Faculties		
Education	123	64.7
Management	44	23.2
Humanities	23	12.1
Marital Status		
Married	3	1.6
Unmarried	187	98.4
Religion		
Hindu	137	72.1
Buddhist	31	16.3
Christian	14	7.4
Others	8	4.2

Status of knowledge on emergency contraception

Among the total respondents, only 121 (63.7%) have heard about the emergency contraception. Among those who have heard about the emergency contraception were further asked on the meaning, indication, side effects and appropriate timing of use to determine the level of knowledge. It shows that about 28.9% of the respondents had fair knowledge on it however still about 71% has poor knowledge.

Use of emergency contraception and management of unintended pregnancies

Among the total 190 respondents only 27 (i.e. 14.2%) had experienced sexual intercourse. Those who had experienced sexual intercourse were further asked on if they have used any contraception methods. Out of 27 respondents, 51.8% have used emergency contraceptive method to protect them from unintended pregnancies.

Similarly among those who had experienced sexual intercourse, only 22% of them got unintended pregnancies. Among those respondents who got pregnant, 83% of them managed it through surgical abortion and 16.7% respondent managed it through medical abortion.

Source of information to know about emergency contraception

Among those respondents who have heard about the emergency contraception, they were asked about the source from where they got the information on emergency contraception. Majority of the respondents i.e. 52.06% of them told that they got information through class room education, 20.6% told that they got information from health personnel and pharmacy. Similarly other sources were mass-media (television and radio) (9.9%), friends (7.4%) etc.

DISCUSSION

Result from this study shows that two third of the respondent have heard about the emergency contraception. Among those who have heard about it only 28.9% have fair knowledge regarding its meaning, indications, side effects and appropriate timing of use but still 71% of the respondents had poor knowledge on it.

Out of total respondents 14.2% of the respondents had experience sexual intercourse and out of them only 51% have used emergency contraceptive method for preventing from unintended pregnancies. This figure is almost close to another similar study conducted in Nepal that shows 13.7% of the adolescents had premarital sexual intercourse.¹⁴ However, it is much less as compared to national data that shows 51% of the women experience sexual intercourse before the age of 18.¹

Out of those who experienced the sexual intercourse, 22% of them got unintended pregnancy. Study shows that about 19% of pregnancies in Nepal are unintended (12% mistimed and 7% unwanted).¹ Similarly another study from Nepal shows that 50% of pregnancies were unintended.¹⁵ Usually unintended pregnancies occur due to the unavailability or failure of contraceptive use. Such scenario could be improved through providing knowledge and awareness among the user, proper counseling and increasing availability of suitable contraceptive method.¹⁰

In majority of the women, unintended pregnancy is the major causes of induced abortions.¹⁰ This study shows that among those who experienced unintended pregnancies 83% of them managed it through surgical abortion and 16.7% of respondent managed it through medical abortion. It shows the need of awareness on medical abortion service and making the service more accessible to the adolescents.

Though the government and non-governmental sector has made huge investment in raising awareness on the family

planning devices and its proper use, but the study data shows that majority (i.e. 52.06%) of the respondents have heard about the emergency contraceptive through classroom education. Similarly about 20.6% of the respondents have heard about it from the health workers and pharmacy personnel, 9.9% have heard from the television and radio and 7.4% of them heard about it from their friends. However, similar study from Nepal shows that 70% of the emergency contraception user got information about it from their friends followed by television (30%) and about 27% of them got information through the health personnel.¹⁶

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

REFERENCES

1. Ministry of Health, Nepal, New ERA, and ICF. Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2016. Kathmandu: Ministry of Health, Nepal, New ERA, and ICF; 2017.
2. Salih NA, Metaferia H, Reda AA, Biadgilign S. Premarital sexual activity among unmarried adolescents in northern Ethiopia: a cross-sectional study. *Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare*. 2015;6(1):9-13.
3. Nworah OA, Sunday NU, Joseph UO, Monday OO, Josephat AC. Knowledge, attitude and practice of emergency contraception among students in tertiary school in Anambra State Southeast Nigeria. *Int J Med Med Sci*. 2010;2:1-4.
4. Aziken ME, Okonta PI, Adedapo BA. Knowledge and perception of emergency contraception among female Nigerian undergraduates. *Int Family Planning Perspectives*. 2003;2:84-7.
5. Emergency contraception, Key facts (2018). World Health Organization. (Retrieved on: 20 March 2019). Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/emergency-contraception>. Accessed on 2 March 2019.
6. Vasilakis C, Jick S, Jick H. The risk of venous thromboembolism in users of postcoital contraceptive pills. *Contraception*. 1999;59(2):79-83.
7. Arowojolu AO, Adeyemi OA. Perception and practice of emergency contraception by post-secondary school students in southwest Nigeria. *Afr Reprod Health*. 2000;4(1):56- 65.
8. Babatunde OA, Ibirongbe DO, Omede O, Babatunde OO, Durowade KA, Salaudeen AG, et al. Knowledge and use of emergency contraception among students of public secondary schools in Ilorin, Nigeria. *Pan Afr Med J*. 2016;23(1):1.
9. Rahaman H, Renjhen P, Kumar A, Pattanshetty S, Sagir A, Dubey H. A study on Emergency contraception practice among Nursing staff In

- Sikkim, India. A cross sectional study. *Aust Med J*. 2010;3:667-71.
10. Shrestha DR, Regmi SC, Dangal G. Abortion: Still Unfinished Agenda in Nepal. *J Nepal Health Res Council*. 2018;16(1):93-8.
 11. Ellertson C, Shochet T, Blanchard K, Trussell J. Emergency contraception: A review of the programmatic and social science literature. *Contraception*. 2000;61:145-86.
 12. Ojule JD, Oriji VK, Georgewill KN. Awareness and Practice of Emergency Contraception. *Niger Health J*. 2008;8:6-9.
 13. Davtyan C. Evidence-based case review. Contraception for adolescents. *West J Med* 2000;172:166-71.
 14. Bhatta DN, Koirala AK, Jha N. Adolescent students' attitude towards premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy. *Health Renaissance*. 2013;11(2):145-9.
 15. CREHPA and Guttmacher Institute. Abortion and Unintended Pregnancy in Nepal. Katmandu, Nepal: CREHPA; 2017.
 16. Thapa S. A new wave in the quiet revolution in contraceptive use in Nepal: the rise of emergency contraception. *Reprod Health*. 2016;13(1):49.

Cite this article as: Bhatta R, Godar S, Aryal K. Knowledge and practice regarding the use of emergency contraception among the higher secondary students of Nepal. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2019;6:2751-4.