

Lady Health Workers: Impact on Knowledge of Modern Contraceptive Methods

Sir,

Pakistan is the 7th populous country with a growth rate of 2.6%, which if left unchecked, can reach upto 335 million by 2050. Pakistan has a total fertility rate of 4.33% and a maternal mortality ratio of 297 per 100,000 live births,¹ making it one of the six countries contributing to more than 50% of all maternal deaths worldwide.² Family planning provides the liberty of having the desired number of brith and adequate spacing among children, which is an effective way to reduce poverty, provide economic growth, lower fertility, and improve maternal and prenatal mortality rates.³

During this study (June- December 2017), conducted in district Mardan (Union Council *Pat Baba*), a total of 340 women of reproductive age group were included, out of which 322 (94.7%) willingly participated. A questionnaire was developed and distributed in them. The total number of women of reproductive age was 322 (100%), out of which 164 (51%) were between 28-39 years, 102 (32%) were between 15-27 years, and 56 (17%) were between 40-49 years. The knowledge of contraceptive methods was known to 158 (98%) in the Lady Health Workers (LHW) covered areas and was 145 (90%) in the area where LHW services were not available. Moreover, 31 (56%) of females in the LHW covered areas had knowledge about female sterilisation and this knowledge was 10 (11%) in the uncovered area. The knowledge about male sterilization in the covered area was 91 (19%) and was 18 (6%) in the uncovered area. The knowledge about intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD) was 98 (70%) in the covered area and was 23 (14%) in the uncovered area. The knowledge about injections was 156 (97%) in the covered area and was 64 (40%) in the uncovered area. The knowledge about implants was 55 (34%) in the covered area and was 11 (7%) in the uncovered area. The knowledge about male condoms was 140 (87%) in the covered area and was 62 (38%) in the uncovered area. The knowledge about female condoms was 4 (2.5%) in the covered area and was 5 (3%) in the uncovered area. The knowledge of emergency contraception method was 13 (8%) in the covered area and 5 (5%) in the uncovered area.

The most frequently used contraceptive method in the covered area was condom 17%. Similar results were observed in a study conducted in KPK where condoms were the most common method of family planning.⁴ A KAP study done in Karachi also illustrated the highest use of condoms by the women of reproductive age.⁵ A study conducted in tehsil Gujar Khan revealed that the

women served by the LHWs were most frequently using condoms, followed by Tubal ligation, IUCD, injection/oral contraceptive pills and male sterilisation.⁶ However, a study conducted among females attending family planning centre in Hayatabad Medical Complex, Peshawar showed that injectable contraceptive use was the highest (47%) followed by IUCD (17%), pills (16%), Tubal ligation (10.5%), and condoms (9%).⁷

There was a significant association between the LHWs presence and the knowledge scores. Moreover, there was a significant association between the LHWs presence and the preferred method used by the women. In those areas, condom was the most preferred method and in the uncovered areas it was withdrawal method. The principal reason for not using the modern methods of family planning was the fear of side effects, so counselling should be done regarding this problem.

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Shahana Nisar¹, Maria Khan² and Uzma Nisar³

¹ Department of Community Medicine, Bacha Khan Medical College, Mardan District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

² Department of Pathology, Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar, Pakistan

³ Department of Radiology, Armed Forces Institute of Radiology and Imaging, Military Hospital, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Correspondence: Dr. Maria Khan, Department of Pathology, Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar, Pakistan

E-mail: kmaria22@hotmail.com

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