



Original article

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STATE OF KNOWLEDGE IN WOMEN OF NIS ABOUT CONTRACEPTION AND FAMILY PLANNING

SUMMARY

Family planning is a historical category, typical of human community since its genesis up to the modern age.

The aim of the study was to make an assessment of the state of knowledge on contraception and family planning in women in the generative period.

We have applied observational cohort study as the fundamental method in the assessment of the problem. Study included 1584 women aged 15-49, who lived in the Municipality of Nis. Data were collected by conducting a poll in the Municipality of Nis, from February to September 2002.

The biggest numbers of interviewees (74.3%) define contraception as protection from unplanned pregnancy.

Most of the interviewees reported that their source of information about contraception were newspapers and media (28.6%), and then school (21.6%).

39.2% of interviewees think that condom represents the most efficient method of contraception, 23.2% think it is pills, 21% - spiral, 10.3% - interrupted coition, 5.8% - calendar of fertile days and 0.5% choose local contraceptive means.

Most of the interviewees (88.8%) estimate their knowledge about contraception as satisfactory.

Complete definition of the idea of family planning was familiar to only 6.1% of interviewees.

Women's knowledge about family planning and methods of contraception is not satisfactory. Therefore, it is necessary to promptly begin with promotion of protection of reproductive health.

Keywords: women, knowledge, family planning

INTRODUCTION

Family planning is a historical category, typical of human community since its genesis up to modern age. Family planning, in its basic meaning, is considered as number of methods and procedures intended to influence on number of pregnancies and timeframe between them (1). Family planning, in its broader meaning, represents a part of entire

demographical and population policy of each country and the planet as a whole.

Globally, family planning shall provide:

- Harmonisation of demographical characteristics between particular countries,
- Improvement of health condition of mothers and children (in connection with health consequences of high fertility),
- Accomplishment of fundamental human

right to decision making about the family size and timeframe between labours (2).

In our country, the objective of family planning is “equalization of birth rate up to the level that shall provide the common reproduction rate in the territory of the whole country” (3).

Insufficient knowledge about the family planning and, more important, methods for family planning lead to increased number of unwanted pregnancies. According to WHO, approximately 120 million couples in the world continue not to use contraception and 300 million are not satisfied with the applied method (4).

There are more than 80 million unwanted pregnancies registered in the world annually and more than half of them is ended with abortion. There are 78000 women who die each year due to the consequences of jeopardized abortion. This number may decrease with the family planning (5).

In comparison to other developed countries, USA has got the highest rate of teenage fertility. There are 9% of teenagers (age 15-19) who get pregnant, with 5% giving birth. Half of the newly infected with HIV comes from the group of younger than the age of 25 (6).

The lowest reported rate of abortion in Europe is in Germany - 8, while highest in Ukraine - 45.4 per 1000 women. In England, abortion rate in 2004 was 17.8 per 1000 women, aged 15-44 (in 1990 the rate was 15), and in USA in 2001 the rate was 16 (7).

The issue of unwanted pregnancies, where majority is ended with abortion, is present in our country, too. Observing the number of women in the generative period, in 1989 (the last year of reliable registration), abortions had their highest rate in Central Serbia (95.1 per 1000 women in the generative age), then in Vojvodina (74.1), Montenegro (48.4) and Kosovo and Metohia (24.1) (8).

It is of particular concern that there is a great number of abortions amongst adolescents, which reaches the number between 1 and 1.4 million per year in the world (9).

AIMS

Objective of the study was to make an assessment about the state of knowledge about contraception and family planning in women in the generative period.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

We have applied observational cohort study as the fundamental method in the problem assessment.

Study included 1584 women aged 15-49,

who lived in the Municipality of Nis, which made 2.5% of women in the generative age according to the 2002 registration. Interviewees were selected according to the random sampling method.

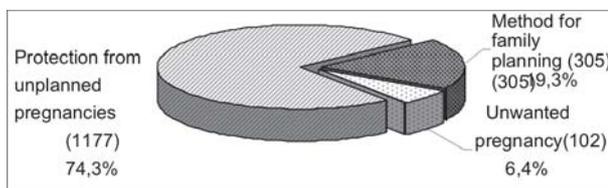
Data were collected by conducting a poll in the Municipality of Nis, from February to September 2002. In order to test the established scientific hypotheses, we applied the statistical method of quantitative analysis. In the description of data, we used standard statistical parameters (arithmetical mean - \bar{X} , standard deviation - SD, structure index - %). Pearson Chi-Squared and Fisher exact test were performed (when at least one expected frequency was less than 5). Values of $p < 0,05$ were considered significant. Statistical calculator was used for data processing, within the Epi Info program (Ver 6.04).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Knowledge about the idea of contraception

The biggest number of interviewees (74.3%) defines contraception as protection from unplanned pregnancy. Only 19.3% know that this is the method for family planning, and 6.4% define contraception as unplanned pregnancy, *Figure 1*.

Figure 1. Structure of interviewees according to knowledge about the idea of contraception



WHO studies showed that women in many underdeveloped countries do not have enough knowledge about the contraception. Hence, women in Tanzania almost did not know anything about contraception and in Nigeria only 34% of women heard about contraception, while only 21% knew about the modern ways of contraception - the best known was condom, then oral pills and intra-uterus spiral (9).

A study undertaken in central Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo (10) showed that 59% of women in Serbia, 61% in Vojvodina and 44% in Kosovo were able to define contraception as the method for prevention of unwanted pregnancy.

Contraception was defined as the method for family planning mostly by interviewees older than the age of 35 (24.9%), while this was the least case with interviewees younger than the age of 20 (6.1%).

There is a statistically significant difference in knowledge about contraception between different age groups the biggest difference between inter-

viewees age 15-19 and 36-49 ($X^2=12,4$; $p<0,005$).

Most of the interviewees with higher education gave the best definition of contraception (29.9% defined it as the method for family planning), while 16.3% of women with primary education and 15.6% of women with secondary education gave such definition. Even 25.5% of women with primary education think that contraception is unwanted pregnancy. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in being informed about contraception among the interviewees with different level of education - the biggest difference between the interviewees with primary and higher education ($X^2=57,0$; $p<0,00001$).

There is a statistically significant difference between employed and unemployed interviewees in knowledge about contraception ($X^2=13,36$; $p<0,005$), because 20.2% of employed and 16.2% of unemployed defined contraception as the family planning method.

There is a statistically significant difference between married and single women ($X^2=15,75$; $p<0,0005$), since 21.7% of married and 13.3% of single ones stated that contraception is the method for family planning.

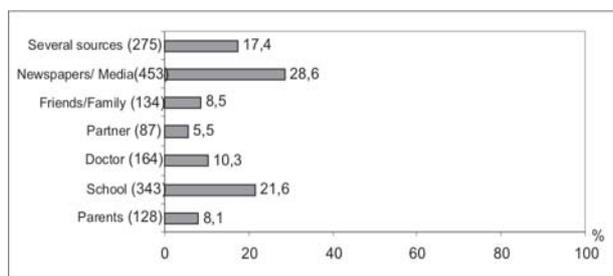
Women from the city, village and outskirts showed almost identical level of knowledge.

Different results came out in the study undertaken in the Municipality of Nis (11), where 62.9% of women aged 16-59 have not heard about contraception - 56.6% were from the city and 85.1% were from the village. With higher level of education comes the improvement of knowledge about contraception.

2. The source of information about contraception

Most of the interviewees reported that their source of information about contraception were newspapers and media (28.6%), then school (21.6%), 17.4% had several sources of information, 10.3% were informed by doctors, 8.1% by parents, 8.5% by friends and relatives and 5.5% by partners, *Figure 2*.

Figure 2. Structure of interviewees according to sources of information about contraception



Women from underdeveloped countries, such as Malawi, are informed about contraception from health professionals when they come to the hospitals for any reason (12).

A study of 5338 married women from poor parts of 6 biggest cities in Pakistan showed that, thanks to the education undertaken in the clinics for family planning, there was an increase of 5% in the knowledge about the methods for family planning, increase of 15% in knowledge about sterilization and increase of 7% in knowledge about intra-uterus spiral (13).

A study of women from Belgrade (14) showed that ¼ of interviewees got the information about sexual life and contraception from the parents, having in mind that such issues were rarely discussed at home in 25.2%, occasionally in 24.4% and often only in 9.6%. Most of the interviewees who got the information from their parents were older and had higher education.

Interviewees younger than the age of 20 are usually informed by several sources (24.6%), older (up to 35) from newspapers and media (26.5%), as well as older than 35 (33.8%). Only 1.5% of the interviewees aged 15-19 received the information from the doctor, 7.2% of the age 20-35 and 18% of older than 35.

There is a statistically significant difference between the interviewees aged 15-19 and 36-49 ($X^2=31,3$; $p<0,0005$) and between the interviewees aged 20-35 and 36-49 ($X^2=71,7$; $p<0,00001$) according to the source of information about contraception.

29.7% of the interviewees from the city received the information about contraception from newspapers and media, while women from the village were mostly informed in school (24.4%) - ($X^2=16,2$; $p<0,05$).

Most of the interviewees with primary education (19.4%) were informed from their partners; with secondary education from newspapers and media mostly (28.1%), as well as the interviewees with higher education (32.4%).

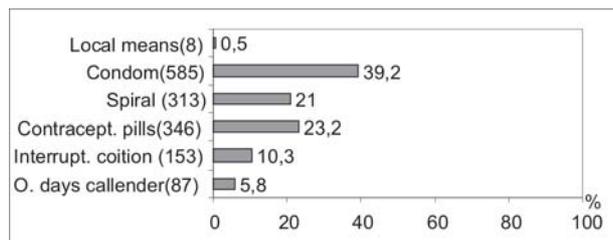
There is a statistically significant difference between the interviewees with different level of education according to the source of information about contraception; biggest difference was found between the interviewees with primary and higher education ($X^2=69,4$; $p<0,000001$).

Unmarried interviewees were mostly informed about contraception by several sources (26.4%), while married from newspapers and media (30.4%). 5.8% of single and 12.2% of married were informed by the doctor ($X^2=60,32$; $p<0,00001$).

3. Opinion about the most efficient method of contraception

39.2% of interviewees think that condom presents the most efficient method of contraception, 23.2% think it is pills, 21% - spiral, 10.3% - interrupted coition, 5.8% - calendar of fertile days and 0.5% choose local contraceptive means, *Figure 3*.

Figure 3. Structure of interviewees according to opinion about the most efficient method of contraception



Knowledge about the efficiency and effect of contraceptive means is very poor in some countries. Hence, in Turkey, according to the WHO report, there is a very small use of oral hormonal contraception due to belief that such contraception causes damage to liver and kidney and provokes cancer (15). In one study undertaken in Great Britain, 63% of women reported that their decision on the contraceptive method was not influenced by the information about HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. However, 27% of women make their decision about the contraceptive method under the influence of such information (16).

In most of the developed countries, women, especially young ones are well-informed about contraception. Hence, according to one study in the USA (17), there are 59% of adolescents visiting 79 clinics for family planning, who apply one of the modern methods of contraception. Approximately 6% does not use contraception, but they go to a clinic in order to obtain the information about contraception.

Condom is a contraceptive method trusted by most of the women in Belgrade (14), while mostly avoided method is hormonal contraception, because it is applied by only 19.4% of the interviewees.

Interviewees up to 19 years old think that condom is the most efficient method of contraception (76.2%). This opinion is, in a lesser percentage, shared by the interviewees aged 20-35 (45.1%). Interviewees aged 36-49 think that the most efficient method of contraception is intra-uterus spiral (29.5%).

There is a statistically significant difference between women of different age in regard to the opinion about the most efficient method of contraception. Apparently, women aged 15-19 in

bigger number (92.3%) give the advantage to the modern methods of contraception, compared with the women aged 20-35, who give the advantage to such methods in 80.5% ($X^2=15,1$; $p<0,05$). 74.3% of women older than the age of 35 think that modern methods of contraception are more efficient than traditional ones, so there is a statistically significant difference between women aged 15-19 and 35-49 ($X^2=81,1$; $p<0,005$) and women aged 20-35 and 35-49 ($X^2=4,6$; $p<0,05$).

Interviewees with higher education have mostly chosen condom as the most efficient method of contraception (44.6%). This method was, in a lesser percentage, chosen by the interviewees with secondary education (42.2%) and, in evidently lesser percentage, by those with primary education (26.7%). It should be mentioned that 20.9% of women with primary education have chosen the interrupted coition as the most efficient method, which was different than with other interviewees.

There is a statistically significant difference between women with primary and secondary education in regard to the opinion about the most efficient method of contraception ($X^2=20,9$; $p<0,0001$), because 61.2% of interviewees with primary education and 80.7% of interviewees with secondary education gave the advantage to the modern methods of contraception. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant difference between women with primary and higher education ($X^2=8,2$; $p<0,005$), because 78.9% of interviewees with higher education think that modern methods of contraception are the most efficient ones.

Both single and married women have chosen condom as the most efficient method of contraception, having in mind that single women have chosen this method in a higher percentage (57.1%) than married (31.6%).

There is a statistically significant difference between single and married interviewees in regard to the opinion about the most efficient method of contraception ($X^2=55,4$; $p<0,00001$), because 86% of single and 76.1% of married have chosen modern methods of contraception as the most efficient ones.

Considerable number of women without children (60.4%) have chosen condom as the most efficient method of contraception, compared with women who have children (30.7%).

There is a statistically significant difference between women with and without children in regard to the opinion about the most efficient method of contraception ($X^2=10,7$; $p<0,005$), because 84.9% of interviewees without children and 76.7% of women with children think that modern methods of contraception are more efficient than the traditional ones.

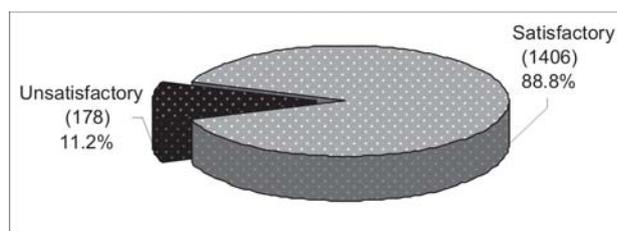
There is no statistically significant difference in opinion about the most efficient method of contraception in terms of place of living and employment status.

None of the interviewees mentioned urgent contraception as possible method of contraception. Studies in England showed that even women in England still do not have enough information about this method. The number of women using urgent hormonal contraception in Great Britain in 2004, no matter the availability, was 7.2 % (18).

4. Estimation of the personal knowledge about contraception

Most of the interviewees (88.8%) estimate their knowledge about contraception as satisfactory. Only 11.2% think that their knowledge is not satisfactory, Figure 4.

Figure 4. Structure of interviewees according to estimation of personal knowledge about contraception



90.3% of interviewees from the city estimate their knowledge about contraception as satisfactory or good. There is a lesser percentage in this regard with women from rural settlements (84.3%) and women from the outskirts of Nis (83.6%).

There is a statistically significant difference between women from urban and rural environments in regard to the personal estimation of the knowledge about contraception ($X^2=4,8$; $p<0,005$).

36.7% of women with primary education estimate their knowledge as unsatisfactory. On the contrary, only 10.5% of interviewees with secondary education and 7.0% of interviewees with higher education estimate their knowledge as unsatisfactory. There is a statistically significant difference between women with primary and secondary education in regard to the estimation of the personal knowledge about contraception ($X^2=56,1$; $p<0,00001$) and between women with primary and higher education ($X^2=61,6$; $p<0,00001$).

More often, unemployed interviewees tend to estimate their knowledge as unsatisfactory (18.9%), compared with employed, where 8.9% consider their knowledge unsatisfactory ($X^2=28,6$; $p<0,00001$).

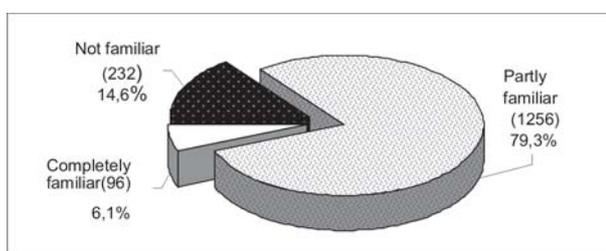
There is no statistically significant difference of estimation of the personal knowledge about

contraception between the interviewees of different age and marital status.

5. Knowledge about the idea of "family planning"

Complete definition of the idea of family planning (decision of giving birth to preferred number of children and decision about timeframe between labours) was familiar only to 6.1% of interviewees. Partial knowledge (either only giving birth to preferred number of children or only decision about timeframe between labours) was showed by 79.3%, while 14.6% was thoroughly unfamiliar with the family planning, Figure 5.

Figure 5. Structure of interviewees according to knowledge about the idea of "family planning"



Similar results were found in the study comprising interviewees from Belgrade (13), which showed that there is less knowledge about family planning than about contraception.

Complete definition of the idea of family planning was given by 7.8% of interviewees aged 20-35, 4.6% - younger than 20 and 2.6% - older than 35. 9.5% of women older than 35, 16.2% of women aged 20-35 and even 29.2% of women younger than the age of 20 are not at all familiar with the idea of family planning.

The greatest statistically significant difference in knowledge about the idea was reported between women of the age of 15 to 19 and 36 to 49 ($X^2=21,4$; $p<0,00001$).

The idea of family planning as a whole is more familiar to single women (9.9%) than married (4.4%). Married women, however, are in a significantly bigger percentage partly familiar with the idea of family planning (83.6%) than single (69%) - ($X^2=43,26$; $p<0,00001$).

Most of the women with children (83.9%) are partly familiar with the idea of family planning. 67.7% of women without children are partly familiar with the idea of family planning, while 22.5% do not know what family planning means, which is almost as twice more than in case of women with children, where 11.5% are familiar with the idea ($X^2=51,41$; $p<0,00001$).

There is no statistically significant difference in knowledge about the idea of family planning between the interviewees with different place of living, education or the employment status.

CONCLUSION

Women's knowledge about family planning and methods of contraception is not satisfactory because only every fifteenth interviewee showed complete knowledge of the idea of family planning and every sixth woman showed complete ignorance. Interviewees who were single, with higher education

and without children were better informed than interviewees who were younger than 20, with primary education and married with children, because they more often have the opinion that modern means of contraception are more efficient than traditional ones.

Therefore, it is necessary to promptly begin with promotion of protection of reproductive health and promotion of the use of modern methods for family planning, as a part of nurturing healthy lifestyle, in order to prevent the occurrence of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, particularly in younger population.

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ZNANJE ŽENA IZ NIŠA O KONTRACENCIJI I PLANIRANJU PORODICE

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SAŽETAK

Planiranje porodice je istorijska kategorija, svojstvena ljudskoj zajednici od njenog nastanka pa do savremenog doba.

Cilj istraživanja bio je sagledavanje znanja žena generativnog perioda o kontracepciji i planiranju porodice.

Kao osnovni metod u sagledavanju problema, primenjena je opservaciona kohortna studija. Istraživanjem je obuhvaćeno 1584 žena starosti 15 - 49 godina koje žive na teritoriji opštine Niš. Podaci su prikupljeni anketnim istraživanjem, koje je sprovedeno na teritoriji opštine Niš u periodu februar - septembar 2002. godine.

Najveći broj ispitanica (74,3%) kontracepciju definiše kao zaštitu od neplanirane trudnoće.

Kao izvor znanja o kontracepciji najveći broj ispitanica navodi novine i medije (28,6%), a zatim školu (21,6%).

U 39,2% ispitanice su mišljenja da je najefikasniji metod kontracepcije kondom, 23,2% smatra da su to pilule, 21% da je to spirala, 10,3% prekinuti snošaj, 5,8% kalendar plodnih dana i 0,5% se opredelilo za lokalna kontraceptivna sredstva.

Najveći broj ispitanica (88,8%) ocenjuje svoje znanje o kontracepciji kao dovoljno.

Potpunu definiciju pojma planiranja porodice znalo je samo 6,1% ispitanica.

Sledi zaključak da je znanje žena o planiranju porodice i metodama kontracepcije nezadovoljavajuće. Zbog toga je neophodno što ranije početi sa promocijom očuvanja reproduktivnog zdravlja.

Ključne reči: žene, znanje, planiranje porodice