

**Research Article****Contraceptive Awareness -A Survey among Antenatal Women****Prof Dr. Alakananda, Dr. Apurba Kumar Bhattacharyya, Dr Ishita Das**

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**Abstract:** A cross sectional study was carried among 300 women attending antenatal OPD in GMCH, where they were interviewed with a pre designed questionnaire after taking informed consent. 36.3% were aware about the need of birth spacing and limiting the number of childbirth while 4% knew the benefits of birth spacing. 92.4% women were aware of at least one method of contraception. OCPs were the most heard about method and healthcare providers were the main source of information. Only 42% cases had ever practiced contraception with most of them using OCPs. The main reason for not using contraception was lack of awareness about need and benefit of contraceptive practice, about various methods and fear of side effects and husband's unwillingness. The study reveals that more efforts are required to educate and motivate couples for contraceptive practice so that they can avail the health benefits of healthy spacing and limiting childbirth which is an essential measure in reducing maternal & perinatal mortality and morbidity along with population stabilisation.

**Keywords:** Contraception, childbirth, OCP, contraceptive.

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**INTRODUCTION**

With an estimated population of 1.2 billion, India is the second most populous country in the world and every year approximately another 16 million are added to this rapidly growing population. Increasing the contraceptive knowledge and practice and proper implementation of family planning services are the major tool for improving the health of the population along with population stabilisation. It is estimated that guaranteeing access to family planning alone could reduce the maternal deaths by 25 per cent and child mortality by 20 per cent.

**METHODS**

This was a cross sectional study conducted over a period of one year from June 2013 to May 2014. 300 antenatal women attending antenatal OPD of Gauhati Medical College & Hospital were interviewed with a pre designed questionnaire containing both closed ended and open ended questions. They were asked about their awareness regarding need and benefits of birth spacing & limiting the number of childbirth & knowledge about contraceptive methods. They were also asked about their source of information and reasons for using or not using contraception along with their preferred choice of contraception. The women were also classified according to their age, parity, educational status, occupation and socio economic class.

**RESULTS**

Majority of the patients (55%) belonged to the age group 20-25 years, 55 % belonged to urban area and 72.3% women were Hindu. 56.6% cases had primary education, 19% cases had secondary education, 2.7% cases were graduates while 21.7% cases were illiterate (Table 1). Majority of the patients were housewife (95.6%) and multiparous (66.6%).

Out of the 300 cases, 109 (36.3%) were aware about the need for birth spacing and limiting childbirth, 12(4%) were aware about the benefits of birth spacing while 277 (92.4%) women knew about at least one method of contraception (Table 2).

Many of the cases knew about more than one method of contraception, OCPs were the most heard of method (93.5%) followed by IUCD (41.5%), condom (34.6%), sterilisation (23.4%) and natural methods (9.02%) as shown in Table 3. Healthcare providers were the source of information in majority of cases (65.7%) followed by social circle (51.9%) and mass media (16.2%). (Table 4)

OCPs were the most frequently used method (66.6%) followed by natural methods (15.1%), IUCD (11.1%) and condoms (7.2%). (Table 5). Most of the women preferred OCPs as they heard it to be safe, were easily available & easy to use. Of the 300 women

interviewed, only 126 had ever used any form of contraception (42%) even though 92.4% were aware about the various methods of contraception. (Table 6).

The various reasons given for not using contraception included lack of awareness about need &

benefit of birth spacing and limiting the number of childbirth (16.7%), fear of side effects (21.8%), lack of awareness about various contraceptive methods (13.3%), husband opposition (14.9%) & willingness to conceive among primigravida (33.3%). (Table 7)

**Table-1: Age, rural/urban area, literacy (N=300)**

	Number	%
<b>Age</b>		
<20	51	17
20-25	165	55
26-30	61	20.4
31-35	23	7.6
<b>Inhabitation</b>		
Urban area	165	55
Rural area	135	45
<b>Educational status</b>		
Illiterate	65	21.7
Primary	170	56.6
Secondary	57	19
Graduate	08	2.7

**Table-2: Awareness regarding contraception**

	Aware	Not aware
<b>Awareness about the need of birth spacing &amp; limiting childbirth</b>	109(36.3%)	191(63.7%)
<b>Awareness about benefits of birth spacing</b>	12(4%)	288(96%)
<b>Aware/heard of contraceptive method</b>	277(92.4%)	23(7.6%)

**Table-3: Contraceptive methods known**

Methods known	Number	%
OCP	259	93.5
Condom	96	34.6
IUCD	115	41.5
Sterilisation	65	23.4
Natural methods	25	9.02

**Table-4: Source of information**

Source of information		
Healthcare provider	182	65.7
Social circle	144	51.9
Mass media	45	16.2

**Table-6: Methods in users**

Methods used	Number	%
OCPs	84	66.6
Natural methods	19	15.1
IUCD	14	11.1
Condoms	09	7.2

**Table-6: Awareness & Practice of contraceptive methods**

<b>Awareness of contraceptive methods</b>	92.4%
<b>Practice of contraceptive methods</b>	42%

**Table-7: Reasons for not using contraception**

Reasons for not using contraception	Number	%
Not aware about need & benefit of birth spacing	29	16.7
Not aware of contraceptive methods	23	13.3
Fear of side effects	38	21.8
Husband opposition	26	14.9
Willing to conceive	58	33.3

Awareness regarding need of birth spacing & limiting childbirth and its benefits bore no significance with literacy status but awareness about contraceptive methods was more in literate group (p value <0.001). When compared among rural and urban women, no difference was found in awareness about contraceptive methods. There was no significant difference in the practice of contraception among literate or illiterate group or between rural or urban group.

## DISCUSSION

In the present study it was seen that only 36.3% knew about the need for birth spacing and limiting the number of childbirth while only 4% knew about the benefits of birth spacing. P. Rasheed et al [1] found that 63.9% women had awareness about the need of birth spacing. The difference was because the later study was conducted among urban based women, mostly literate.

In our present study it was seen that 92.4% were aware/heard about any one method of contraception. The results are similar to the studies by Aniekan Abasiattai in Nigeria [2] where 87.6% cases and by H Tuladhar et al [3] in Nepal where 93% cases knew about contraceptive methods.

It was also seen that awareness about contraceptive methods was more in the literate group. H Tuladhar et al [3] also observed in their study that when women's education was of secondary or higher level, awareness was 100.0%. This finding is in accordance with the studies done in Pakistan with 95.0% awareness in educated women as compared with 73.0% in illiterate women [4].

Our present study revealed that in majority of the cases the source of information was healthcare providers (65.7%). However media was found to be the main source of information in the study by H Tuladhar et al [3] and Rozina Mustafa et al [5] in Karachi. Mass media plays an important role in promotion and acceptability of contraception [6]. Thus by increasing mass media coverage in our catering population we can further increase contraceptive awareness. Even though 92.4% cases were aware of contraceptive methods but only 42% cases had ever used any form of contraception indicating a wide gap between knowledge and practice. This gap has been evident in many other studies by H Tuladhar et al [3] where awareness is 93%

but practice is 33.5% & by Aniekan Abasiattai where awareness is 87.6% and practice is 49.5%.

OCPs were the most used contraceptive method (66.6%) in our study. Aniekan Abasiattai [2] found male condoms to be the most used method (40.4%) while H Tuladhar et al [3] found the most used method in their study was depo provera (10%). The difference is because factors like choice of contraceptive method, availability, source of information, government policies which vary from place to place.

Fear of side effects, lack of awareness about birth spacing, husband opposition and lack of awareness about contraceptive methods were the various reasons cited by women for not using contraception. Lavanya KS et al in their study [7] noted that the reasons for not using contraception included non reliability, lack of knowledge, partner opposition, willing to have more children and fear of side effects.

## CONCLUSION

The present study indicates that the awareness regarding the need & benefits of birth spacing & limiting the number of childbirth was inadequate. Even though knowledge about the methods of contraception was encouraging but the actual practice of contraception was low at 42%, indicating a significant gap between knowledge and practice of contraception. Thus it is necessary to educate couples about the health benefits of healthy spacing and limiting number of childbirth which play an important role in reducing maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity along with population stabilisation.

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