

Menstrual Pattern, Sexual Behavior and Contraceptive Use among Postpartum Women in a tertiary care hospital in Davangere

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Abstract

Background: Postpartum family planning (PPFP) is the initiation and use of contraceptives during the first year after delivery. The first year after delivery is a complex period, during which a woman has to care for her newborn child as well as cope with a series of emotional, physical and physiological changes- which affect her fertility return. In spite of these specific needs, little attention is paid to postpartum contraception. Most of the postpartum mothers are not aware of the factors associated with fertility return which increases exposure to the risk of unintended pregnancy resulting in short inter pregnancy intervals.

Aim: To know the postpartum contraceptive use and to study their menstrual pattern and sexual behavior among the first time mothers during the postpartum period.

Methods: The study population was 500 which comprised of all the first time mothers in their first year of delivery attending Maternal and Child Health (MCH) or immunization clinic. A purposive sample of 500 postpartum mothers was selected for the study, such that 125 postpartum mothers were in 0-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12 months of postpartum period each. The data was collected by interview method using predesigned, pretested, semi-structured questionnaire. Results were expressed in the form of proportions.

Results: Out of 500 postpartum mothers, only 115 (23%) were using modern contraception. Male condom was the most common contraceptive used with 65 (13%) using them followed by IUCD 25(5%), OCP 20(4%) while injectable hormones was the least contraceptive used by 5(1%). Modern contraception use was nil, 4%, 7%, and 12% during 0-3rd, 4th-6th, 7th-9th, 10-12th postpartum month respectively. During 0-3rd postpartum month, 1% had resumed menses and 12% had initiated sexual activity. During 4th to 6th postpartum, 13% had resumed menses and 17% had initiated sexual activity. During 7th to 9th postpartum, 13% had resumed menses and 18% had initiated sexual activity. During 10th to 12th postpartum, 17% had resumed menses and 21% had initiated sexual activity.

Conclusion: Thus, the resumption of menses and initiation and continuation of sexual activity increased much with each postpartum month while modern contraception use though it increased but still it was less, exposing the postpartum mothers to the risk of pregnancy.

Key words: postpartum mothers, contraception, resumption of menses, sexual activity.

Introduction

Maternal health remains a major global concern since pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death, disease, and disability among women 15–45 years of age. This concern is also well acknowledged in the fifth millennium development goal (MDG) [1]. Postpartum family planning (PPFP) is the initiation and use of contraceptives during the first year after delivery [2]. Postpartum contraception is defined as the initiation and use of a contraceptive method after childbirth or abortion, but before fertility returns [3]. The first year after delivery is a complex period, during which a woman has to care for her newborn

child as well as cope with a series of emotional, physical and physiological changes- which affect her fertility return. After childbirth a woman has special needs, which include the challenge of, recovery from pregnancy and delivery, and the desire to space or limit childbirth [4]. In spite of these specific needs, little attention is paid to postpartum contraception. Most of the postpartum mothers are not aware of the factors associated with fertility return which increases exposure to the risk of unintended pregnancy resulting in short interpregnancy intervals. The risk is even greater among the first time mothers who do not know what to expect after their first delivery [5,6].

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This increases adverse maternal and child outcomes. Furthermore, the largest proportion of women with an unmet need for contraception is found among those in their first year after first childbirth [7,8]. Concentrating efforts to reduce unmet need among these women could have a proportionally bigger impact on increasing contraceptive use than concentrating on any other group. Hence, this study is designed to identify contraceptive use and resumption of sexual intercourse after childbirth among first time mothers in Davangere.

Objectives

1. To know the postpartum contraceptive use among the first time mothers.
2. To study their menstrual pattern and sexual behavior during the postpartum period.

Methodology

This is a descriptive cross-sectional study which was carried in Maternal and Child Health clinic which is attached to Immunization Clinic of JJM Medical College and Hospital, Davangere. The study population comprised of all the first time mothers in their first year of delivery attending MCH or immunization clinic. Since the contraception use during postpartum period is minimal, a purposive sample of 500 postpartum mothers was selected for the study, such that 125 postpartum mothers were in 0-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12 months of postpartum period each. The data was collected over period of 6 months (1st June to 30th November 2012). All those postpartum mothers who had delivered for the first time with their child less than 1 year, married and non-pregnant at the time of study, who were healthy and not suffering from chronic conditions and consenting to participate in the study were included, while those postpartum mothers who have borne more than 1 child, who were abstaining from sexual activity or unmarried, separated or pregnant, having chronic conditions were excluded from the study. Data was collected by interviewing the postpartum mothers using predesigned, pre-tested questionnaire and data was analyzed by using proportion.

Results

The average age of the postpartum mothers was 23 years, with majority being in 21-25 age groups. Only

27% (135) had attained at least secondary education, majority 36 % (180) had education upto primary school. About 57% (285) were from rural areas and majority 63% (315) belonging to lower class that is Class IV and V according to Modified B.G. Prasad Classification (2012) (Table 1).

Table 1. General demographic profile of postpartum mothers

Characteristic	Frequency (n=500)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
15-20	175	35
21-25	270	54
26-30	55	11
Education		
Illiterate	125	25
Primary school	180	36
Secondary school	135	27
College and above	60	12
Residence		
Urban	220	44
Rural	285	57
Socioeconomic status		
Class IV and V	315	63
Class II and III	185	37

Out of 500 postpartum mothers, only 115 (23%) were using modern contraception. Male condom was the most common contraceptive used with 65 (13%) using them, followed by IUCD 25(5%), OCP 20(4%) while injectable hormones was the least contraceptive used by 5(1%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of first time mothers by postpartum contraceptive use

Contraceptive use	Frequency (n=500)	Percentage (%)
Yes	115	23
No	385	77
Type of Modern contraceptive used		
Male Condom	65	13
IUCD	25	5
OCP	20	4
Injectable Hormones	5	1

Majority of postpartum mothers i.e 28% (140) were not aware of any contraceptive method, 26% (130) reported fear of side effects of contraceptive methods, while 17% (85) wanted another child soon, a minority 3% (15) reported husband/family's opposition, 2% (10) religious constraints and 1% (5) financial problems as reasons for not using any contraceptive method (Figure 1).

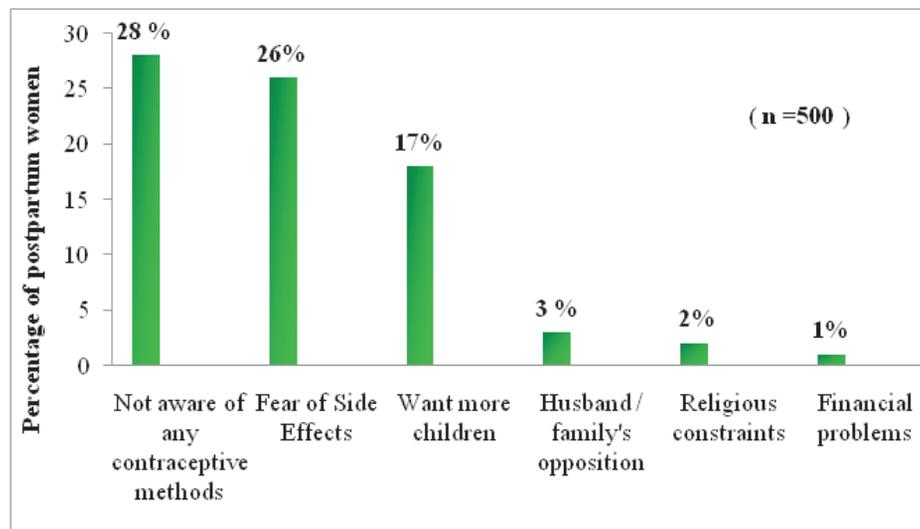


Figure 1. Reasons for not using contraceptives

During the first three postpartum months, majority 19% (95) of postpartum mothers were following traditional methods like coitus interruptus/rhythm method while 6% (30) were following lactational amenorrhea method (LAM). During fourth to sixth postpartum months, modern contraception use and LAM was 4% (20) each and other traditional methods

was 8% (40). During Seventh to Ninth postpartum months, modern contraception use was 7% (35) and Other traditional methods was 5% (25). During the last three postpartum months (10th -12th) modern contraception use was 12% (60) while Other traditional methods was 5% (25). (Table 3)

Table 3. Comparison of Modern contraception use with Traditional methods and Lactational Amenorrhea Method

Postpartum months (n=500)	Modern Contraception	Traditional Methods	
		LAM	Others
0-3	-	30 (6%)	95 (19%)
4-6	20 (4%)	20 (4%)	40 (8%)
7-9	35 (7%)	-	25 (5%)
10-12	60 (12%)	-	25 (5%)
Total	115 (23%)	50 (10%)	175 (37%)

In the present study, only 1% (5) of postpartum mothers had resumed their menstruation 12% (60) had initiated their sexual activity while modern contraception use was nil by first three months

postpartum (0-3 months). This exposes them to the risk of pregnancy even if they are using LAM (Lactational Amenorrhea Method). By 4th -6th postpartum months only 13% (65) of postpartum

mothers had resumed their menstruation, 17% (85) had initiated their sexual activity while modern contraception use was 4% (20). By 7th-9th postpartum months only 18% (90) of postpartum mothers had resumed their menstruation, 18% (90) had initiated their sexual activity while modern contraception use

was 7% (35). During the last three postpartum months only 21% (105) of postpartum mothers had resumed their menstruation, 23% (115) had initiated their sexual activity while modern contraception use was 12% (60) (Table 4) (Figure 2).

Table 4. Return of menses and Sexual activity during the postpartum months

Postpartum months (n=500)	Return of Menses	Sexual activity	Modern Contraception use
0-3	5 (1%)	60 (12%)	0
4-6	65 (13%)	85 (17%)	20 (4%)
7-9	65 (13%)	90 (18%)	35 (7%)
10-12	105 (21%)	115 (23%)	60 (12%)

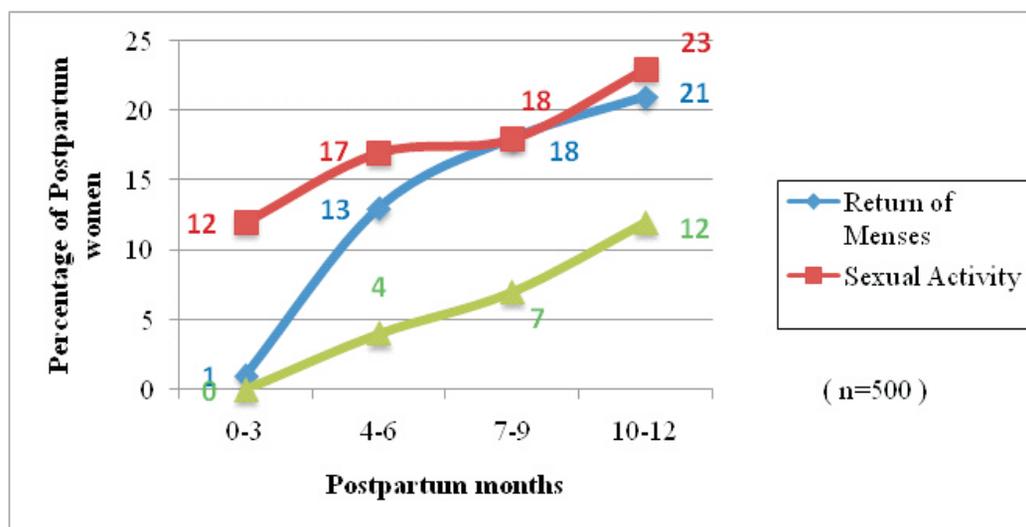


Figure 2. Return of menses and Sexual activity during the postpartum months

Discussion

In our study, 13% of postpartum women were using male condoms. In Population Council study [10], 14% were using male condoms. Similar results were observed in study by Shruti Goel [11] and John E Ekebua [12]. In our study, 17% and 26% of postpartum women reported wanted another baby soon and fear of side effects respectively as the reason for not using any contraception. These results are comparable with the study by Shruti Goel [11]

where 17% wanted another child soon, 12% had fear of contraceptive method while 10% cited family opposition as the reasons for not using contraception.

In the study by John A Ross [7], about 30% of postpartum women were using a contraceptive method with One-fourth using traditional methods. The Population Council study [10] reveals that among currently non-pregnant women aged 15-34 years (N=4,049), 41% were using a contraceptive method in the postpartum period. Contraceptive method use

was 28 % among women who had given birth in the 12 months preceding the survey. Of these, 27 % were using modern methods while 14 % were depending on traditional methods. These results are in agreement with the present study.

In the study by Shruti Goel [11], among users of contraception, 65% were using modern methods and 35 % were using traditional methods. In the study by John A Ross [7] it was observed that on average, women in Latin America and Asia resume menstruation much earlier than women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Though it is low 0–3 months postpartum, but then rises sharply. The increase among women in Asia and Latin America is nearly double that for Sub-Saharan Africa, although by one year only about 60% of women in Asia would have experienced return of menses.

Another study done in Nairobi on Postpartum mothers [9] showed the results from the survival curves show that the time at which 50% and 75% of the women report to have resumed their menses following birth is 7 and 14 months, respectively. The survival curve for sexual resummptions indicates that 50% and 70% of the women had resumed their sexual relations within the first 4 and 6 months after giving birth, respectively. In terms of patterns of contraceptive use among postpartum women, the survival curve in that study shows that about 50% of the women reported having used a modern contraceptive method by the seventh month of postpartum [9]. But in our study, overall, 48% had resumed their menses and 70% had initiated sexual activity while only 23% of women were using modern contraception during the first year postpartum. Thus, the resumption of menses and initiation and continuation of sexual activity increased much with each postpartum month while modern contraception use though it increased but still it was less exposing the postpartum mothers to the risk of pregnancy.

Conclusion

In the absence of contraception, the probability of pregnancy is related to the regularity of sexual intercourse. The information on initiation of intercourse after childbirth is important for the

refinement of the measurement of exposure to pregnancy. The visible sign of return of fertility after childbirth is the resumption of menstruation, which is usually preceded by ovulation. This study showed that the period of voluntary sexual inactivity after childbirth was decreasing with increasing months; while the duration of postpartum amenorrhea was decreasing with increasing months. The relationship between initiation of coitus and resumption of menstruation was significant. This suggests high susceptibility to pregnancy, especially as initiation of coitus was significantly associated with non-contraceptive use. Initiation of contraceptive use has been reported to be unnecessary within 3 weeks of delivery [13]. It should, however, be commenced before a fecund woman becomes susceptible to pregnancy, ie, before resumption of menstruation or initiation of coitus. The results confirm the importance of this period in both respects, and advocate institutional access at the time of delivery to provide contraception services for women in this period.

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