

## Knowledge, Perceptions, and Barriers of Preconception Care among Healthcare Workers in Nigeria

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**Abstract :** Introduction: This study aims to examine the knowledge and perceptions of preconception care among healthcare workers in Nigeria, recognizing its crucial role in ensuring safe pregnancies. Despite its significance, awareness of preconception care remains low in the country. The study seeks to assess the understanding of preconception services and identify the barriers that hinder their efficacy. Methods: Through semi-structured interviews, 129 healthcare workers across six states in Nigeria were interviewed between January and March 2023. The interviews explored the healthcare workers' knowledge of preconception care practices, the socio-cultural influences shaping decision-making, and the challenges that limit accessibility and utilization of preconception care services. Results: The findings reveal a limited knowledge of preconception care among healthcare workers, primarily due to inadequate information dissemination within the healthcare system. Additionally, cultural beliefs significantly influence perceptions surrounding preconception care. Furthermore, financial constraints, distance to healthcare facilities, and poor health infrastructure disproportionately restrict access to preconception services, particularly for vulnerable populations. The study also highlights insufficient skills and outdated training among healthcare workers regarding preconception guidance, primarily attributed to limited opportunities for professional development. Discussion: To improve preconception care in Nigeria, comprehensive education programs must be implemented, taking into account the societal influences that shape perceptions and behaviors. These programs should aim to dispel myths and promote evidence-based practices. Additionally, training healthcare workers and integrating preconception care services into primary care settings, with support from religious and community leaders, can help overcome barriers to access. Strategies should prioritize affordability while emphasizing the broader benefits of preconception care beyond fertility concerns alone. Lastly, widespread literacy campaigns utilizing trusted channels are crucial for effectively disseminating information and promoting the adoption of preconception practices in Nigeria.

**Keywords :** preconception care, knowledge, healthcare workers, Nigeria, barriers, education, training

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