

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Female Students regarding Emergency Contraception at Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

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Abstract : Background: Unintended pregnancies constitute a most serious public health challenge to women to an extent that they sometimes end in illegal abortions resulting in adverse consequences. However, the introduction of emergency contraception has served as the last chance for women to avoid unintended pregnancies, though, in countries like Zimbabwe the cause for underutilisation of emergency contraception has been hardly investigated. Purpose: The main purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of female students regarding emergency contraception among in preventing unintended pregnancy. Methodology: A quantitative approach using descriptive cross-sectional survey design was conducted among 319 stratified random sampled female university students of Midland State University, Zimbabwe. Self-administered close-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. To ensure validity, the development of the instrument was guided by a wide range of literature and the inputs of experts. The instrument was retested for reliability and the responses will be comparing using Cronbach's alpha which yielded high reliability alpha (α) value of 0.84. Data was coded and entered into a computer using Microsoft Excel 2010 and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 22.0. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data in the form of cross tabulation and the results were presented in table, graphs and pie charts. Results: The results indicated that apart from all sources of information about EC, mass media has shown to be the most famous. Although female students knows about EC, the knowledge about effective level and correct use of EC poor. The attitudes of female students at MSU are unfavourable for EC as they gave reasons like EC promotes promiscuity and it can pose risk. The practice of EC at MSU is low with only 47% of respondents said they have once use EC. Conclusion and recommendation: The study concluded the lack of actual knowledge about EC which has directly influenced attitudes and practices. The study concluded that there MSU female students has fair knowledge about EC which has resulted in negative and attitudes towards EC with few EC practices. The study, therefore, recommends the adoption and use of Health Belief Model approach in promoting the young to use EC to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Keywords : emergency contraception, knowledge, attitude, practice, female students

Conference Title : ICGSH 2016 : International Conference on Gender, Sex and Healthcare

Conference Location : Singapore, Singapore

Conference Dates : March 03-04, 2016