

Lactational Amenorrhea Method for Family Planning: An Evaluation of Compliance in the Philippines

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Abstract : Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) for family planning is at least 98% effective at preventing pregnancy when all criteria are met; (1) the mother is exclusively or nearly exclusively breastfeeding, (2) the mother is amenorrheic (not menstruating), and (3) the baby is six months old or younger. LAM is particularly suited for women interested in family planning accepted by religious authorities. As a majority catholic nation, LAM is a common and accepted form of family planning in the Philippines. The USAID funded, LuzonHealth project conducted a prospective evaluation in Legazpi City to inform the enhancement of guidelines aimed at increasing LAM compliance and encouraging a second form of contraceptive once LAM protection expires. LAM compliance, reasons for non-compliance, family planning referral and uptake of secondary modern family planning methods were tracked over a nine-month period among 521 postpartum women. The evaluation found that at three months postpartum, 97% of women either met LAM criteria or had shifted to a non-LAM modern family planning method. In month six 87% of women no longer met LAM criteria and of these only 35% had shifted to an alternative modern family planning method. This means that at six-months postpartum 65% of the women in this evaluation were not protected against pregnancy through modern family planning methods. By postpartum month nine, 70% of the women had been referred to family planning counseling, yet of those referred only 34% reported using modern family planning methods. This evaluation clearly indicates scale-up of non-LAM modern family planning does not sufficiently complement the scale-down of LAM compliance. There is a need to increase client knowledge and understanding of LAM as a temporary family planning method with a strong focus on preparing to shift to another form of modern family planning once LAM protection expires. Additionally, there is great need to restructure the referral mechanism to ensure efficacy and quality of care.

Keywords : Philippines, family planning, lactational amenorrhea method, contraceptives

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