

HEALTH INFORMATION NEEDS OF PREGNANT WOMEN DURING THE PREGNANCY PERIOD

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Abstract

Pregnancy is a precious period for a woman. Pregnant women undergo many physiological, psychological, physical and social changes throughout the pregnancy period. During this period, access to health-related information is vital, since decisions and changes would affect the mother as well as the unborn fetus. The study will provide a guide to plan effective health education programs to meet the real needs of pregnant women. The paper presents the results of a preliminary study on assessing information needs of pregnant women. The study examined mainly the sources of health information used by pregnant women, topics of information they need and the barriers for effective use of health information by the pregnant women.

Descriptive survey method was used and the subjects for the study were pregnant women who attended the antenatal clinic in Jaffna named Hamshiya clinic. The data was collected by the researcher through administering a questionnaire. A random sample size of hundred women was selected for the study. All the participants were Tamil speaking pregnant women, as the majority of the people living in Jaffna are Tamils. Data

collected through the questionnaire was analyzed with SPSS (20.0) software using descriptive statistics.

The response rate of the study was (n=81) eighty-one percent. The study revealed that all the participants needed information on various topics during the pregnancy period. With regard to the sources of information, family members or friends were the main source of information for majority (n=78, 96%) of the pregnant women in the study. It was followed by Midwives (n=59, 73%); antenatal clinics (n=52, 64%); doctors (n=46, 57%) and internet (n=39, 48%). Seventy nine percent of the participants (n=64, 79%) reported that they needed information about pregnancy complications. It was followed by both nutrition and the development and growth of fetus, which was 47% (n=38). Exercise during pregnancy was the least needed information (n=07, 09%) among the given choices of topics. Newborn care (n=72, 89%) and the complications during childbirth (n=58, 72%) were the mostly required information with regard to the childbirth. Pregnant mothers responded that lack of availability of information (n=52, 64%) was the major barrier in accessing information. It was followed by language barrier, which was 40% (n=32).

Pregnant women mainly depend on family members or friends as a source of information. They need different topics of information during pregnancy period. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the mostly needed information by the participants in this study. Existing information sources are not enough to meet the needs of the pregnant women. The study suggests that pregnant women need updated and easily accessible information especially in their mother tongue, which is Tamil. The findings of the study including identified barriers in accessing information should be taken into consideration when planning programs to provide health information to meet the needs of the pregnant mothers. It is recommended that an in depth study using a large sample size be carried out to reach a conclusion with a generalized outcome.

Keywords: *Health Information Needs, Information Sources, Pregnant Women, Information Use.*