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Knowledge, attitude and practice about menstrual cup among healthcare professionals

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Abstract

Aim: To assess the knowledge, attitude and practice about menstrual cup among health care professionals.
Methods: A cross-sectional study was done using structured questionnaire method to collect data among health care professionals in Mangalore. Total sample size of 330 was taken.
Results: Out of total 330 participants, 296 (91%) were aware of the menstrual cup and media was their main source of information. Maximum number of participants had a good knowledge about menstrual cups in terms of its various sizes, durability, mechanism of action, material used and mode of sterilization, cost of the cup. 87.6% participants are using sanitary pads currently. Discomfort (54.2%) was the major concern regarding menstrual cup use. A menstruation cup would be used by 137 (42.4%) of the participants if it was made available.
Conclusion: Despite of good knowledge about the menstrual cup amongst the health care professionals in the study, practice was found to be poor. Healthcare professionals, who are more open to the idea of eco-friendly products, should be addressed in order to increase the adoption rate of menstruation cups. The government must implement an awareness campaign so that the dream of a "pad free country" might soon become a reality.

Keywords: Knowledge, attitude, practice, menstrual cup, health care professionals

Introduction

Menstrual management practices vary widely and are greatly impacted by an individual's culture, customs, literacy level, economic situation, and access to resources [1]. Managing menstrual hygiene and having access to safe, affordable menstrual hygiene products are key social goals for the government, especially in low socioeconomic countries [2]. To improve menstrual hygiene, sanitary pads, tampons, and menstrual cups (MC) have been introduced. The most widely used and favored among women and girls among these are disposable sanitary pads. However, they have drawbacks like leakage and disposal issues in addition to ongoing monthly costs [3].

According to studies, menstrual health management (MHM) in India has to be improved by educating people about MHM products, promoting the use of hygienic absorbents and their disposal, and maintaining the menstrual flow efficiently and hygienically. According to another survey, 62% of young women in India between the ages of 15 -24 years still use clothes as their sanitary protection. Between 43% and 88% of the female population still wash their cotton cloths and reuse them in place of disposable pads [4]. Therefore, maintaining menstrual hygiene is a crucial but neglected issue in rural areas. Menstrual protection in these communities is typically provided by locally produced napkins and sanitary napkins, according to a prior report [5].

One alternative to sanitary napkins that is progressively gaining preference is the menstrual cup. Menstrual cups were first patented in the USA and are currently sold worldwide by approximately 100 companies [6]. These cups are made of better grade medical silicone, latex, rubber, or elastomer. These cups, which collect menstrual flow, must be put inside the vaginal canal. They can be removed and reinserted, and after each cycle, they must be boiled [6]. Menstrual cups substantially reduce waste production compared to sanitary pads and tampons. It is more environment friendly, economical, and has a lifespan of up to 10 years without posing any significant health risks. When it comes to efficiently managing menstrual waste, education, knowledge, and accessibility of eco-friendly practices are essential. Making a green switch will be simple for everyone once that has been taken care of.

Menstrual cups have gotten good reviews from schoolgirls, according to a few studies done earlier in low- and middle-income nations.

These studies have suggested that these cups may be an option for women of reproductive age group. Menstrual cup use among reproductive women is rare in India, despite their practicability and safety. Therefore, the knowledge, practices, and attitudes of women working as health care professionals regarding menstrual cups were assessed in the current study.

Objective

To assess knowledge, attitude and practice about Menstrual Cup among healthcare professionals.

Need for the study

- There are many documented advantages of menstrual cup over sanitary pads but why same does not reflect on the pattern of it being used.
- Is it lack knowledge, ease of availability or a certain perceived notion that has hindered its popularity?
- Health care individuals are the first contact point of society therefore we have chosen them as our target group in our study and assessed their knowledge, attitude and practice in regard to menstrual cups.
- With the government peddling and promoting eco friendly state, menstrual cups can have a major role in years to come.

Methods

This is a cross-sectional study conducted at Yenepoya Medical College, Mangalore. The data was collected from the health care professionals which included medical and nursing staff, medical postgraduates and interns who fulfilled the inclusion criteria & were willing to participate. The questionnaire included demographic data like age, marital status, education, knowledge, concerns practices and attitude towards menstrual cup was circulated to the participants. The study was started after the approval from the institutes ethical committee and consent of participants. In MS Excel, the data were entered after being obtained and a descriptive analysis was performed by calculating the percentage.

Inclusion Criteria

This study included all female employees and students at the institute who were within the reproductive age range of 18 to 45 years.

Exclusion Criteria

Women who have attained menopause because of surgical or physiological reasons.

- Women with age < 18yrs
- Women who are not willing to participate

Results

A total of 330 individuals participated in the study with majority being in the age group of 21-30 years and majority of them were unmarried. With regard to the current use of menstrual practice most of the subjects 88% were using sanitary pads and only around 11% of subjects were using menstrual cups.

Data pertaining to the Knowledge of menstrual cups revealed that majority of the health care workers in the study had adequate knowledge in regard to menstrual cup. 75% of the subjects knew about emptying time, 62% and 50% had adequate knowledge regarding the material and method of sterilization.

Coming to usage of menstrual cups around 11% had a wrong notion that menstrual cups could not be used in virgins and 33.4% of the subjects felt that it causes TSS. Around 95% of the subjects felt that it is eco friendly, 86.2% of the subjects knew that menstrual cups could be used while swimming and bathing. Most of the subjects were aware of different sizes, safety and durability of menstrual cup.

Although not a regular method of usage among the health care professionals around 84% were willing to use and 80% were ready to recommend menstrual cup as an alternative to sanitary napkin.

Table 1: Demography

Education	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Nursing
	46%	40%	14%
Age	21-30 Years	31-40 Years	>40 Years
	84%	13%	3%
Sanitary protection	Sanitary napkins	Menstrual cup	Others
	88%	11%	1%
Marital status	Married	Unmarried	
	70%	30%	

Table 2: Knowledge

	Yes	No
Used in virgins	89%	11%
Causes TSS	33.4%	66.6%
Can be used while swimming and bathing	86.2%	13.8%
Method of contraception	9.5%	90.5%
Knowledge about size	80.5%	19.5%
Environment friendly	95%	5%
Durability	94%	6%
Safe	88%	12%

Table 3: Attitude

Willing to use	84%	16%
Willing to recommend	80%	20%

Table 4: Practice

Pads	Menstrual cup	Others
88%	11%	1%

Discussion

In the present study most of the participating individual were in the age group of 21 -31 years and were unmarried. Since the study was done among health care individuals most of them were undergraduates. 91% of the subjects were aware about menstrual cup and the awareness source was media. social media being main source of information for urban population. Although awareness was high but only 11% were using menstrual cup and a good majority of 88% used sanitary napkin. A similar study was done in south India by Shwetha *et al.* [7] among women in reproductive age group in a tertiary centre in South India. The results were similar to present study where in they reported that although 82% of the participants have adequate knowledge about the menstrual cup still only 6% had used it. In that study, most of the study participants were in the 16 -30 years age group.

In the present study maximum subjects were using sanitary napkin as method of practice these findings are similar with other Indian community based study which showed that sanitary napkin was the most common method used for menstrual hygiene [5].

In the present study 88% believed menstrual cups were safe to

use. 33.4% were of view that TSS is associated with menstrual cups. In a study done by Juma J *et al* [8], wherein safety of menstrual cup was evaluated among primary school girls, found that cups are safe with no health hazards and event of TSS.

In present study, 296 (91%) were aware of the menstrual cup and media was their main source of information. Maximum number of participants had a good knowledge about menstrual cups in terms of its various sizes, durability, mechanism of action, material used mode of sterilization and cost of the cup.

In the present study, the main concern about the use of menstrual cup was discomfort (54.2%) followed by leakage (18%). Whereas a similar study done by Meghana *et al*. [9] reported leakage as main concern followed by discomfort. Also a meta analysis done by Anna *et al* [10] with regard to availability use and safety of menstrual cup he concluded that outcome of leakage and reported leakage was similar or lower for menstrual cups than for disposable pads or tampons.

84% of the participants said if a menstrual cup is made available they are willing to use it and also recommend it. Studies conducted have shown a high retention rate in terms of usage. A metanalysis done by Anna *et al* [10] concluded that 73% of participants wished to continue use of the menstrual cup at the end of study completion.

Conclusion

In this study, healthcare professionals' attitudes, knowledge, and practices towards the menstrual cup were thoroughly assessed. This study comes to the conclusion that even though many of the participants were aware of the menstrual cup's usage, it has still not been widely accepted. There is an enormous gap between women's knowledge about and desire to use menstruation cups. This survey also revealed that the majority of participants are willing to utilize the menstrual cup if it is made available. Additionally, this study emphasized the value of campaigns to educate people about the use of menstrual cups because they can encourage reproductive women to practice good menstrual hygiene. Health care workers are the first point of contact for community acceptance of menstrual cups among them can lead to increase in recommendation as often we preach what we practice.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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