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Study of knowledge and practices of menstrual hygiene among reproductive age group females in a rural medical college hospital in U.P.

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Abstract

Introduction: Menstruation is a naturally occurring phenomenon which has an impact on physical and mental health of a woman. Therefore proper knowledge attitude and hygienic practices right from the childhood may escalate healthy well-being and also extenuate various myths and social beliefs regarding menstruation.

Objective: To assess the knowledge and practices of Menstrual hygiene among reproductive age group females in a rural medical college Hospital in U.P.

Methodology: It's a community based cross sectional study in OPD dept. of Obst. & Gynae in a rural medical college hospital in U.P. A predesigned pretested questionnaire was allocated.

Results: A total of 543 female were interviewed. 41% had menarche around 13 years. 80% were unaware about menstruation before menarche. 86% did not know the cause of menstruation. 64% had no knowledge regarding the origin of the blood flow. 62% were using sanitary pads as absorbent and 72% were using open disposal method out of them. 91% and 86% were taking bath and doing hand washing during menstruation regularly. More than 80% were refrained from doing religious act during menstruation.

Keywords: Knowledge, hygienic practices, menstruation, reproductive age group female

Introduction

Menstruation is a naturally occurring physiological phenomenon in adolescent girls and pre menopausal women ^[1]. It is a phenomenon unique to females. The onset of menstruation is one of the most important changes occurring among the girls between 11-15 years with a mean of 13 year ^[2]. It is a physiological process that is associated several mental as well as physical morbidities. Globally about 52% of female population is of reproductive age, meaning menstruation in part of their normal life and menstrual hygiene is therefore an essential part of basic hygienic practices. Adolescent is the age where knowledge, attitude and practices develop and are followed throughout their life and also passed on to the next generation. Therefore any faulty beliefs, knowledge or practices related to menstruation will affect the health of the women along with their neighborhood and the future generation too. Menstrual hygiene practices also vary in urban and rural background especially In Indian scenario where talking about menstruation and reproductive life is considered taboo. Various myth and social belief are also sustaining to menstruation. Most girls are unaware about proper menstrual practices at the age of menarche ^[3]. Isolation of the menstruating girls and restriction being imposed on on them in the family, have reinforced a negative attitude towards menstruation. Lacking a platform to share menstrual hygiene problems, girls and women often suffer from discomfort and infection and use of unhygienic clothes may lead to development of infection of reproductive tract. If the menstrual health is not handled properly can lead to the infection of the urinary tract, pelvic inflammatory diseases and vaginal thrush as well as bad odor, soiled garments.

Materials and Methods

Type of Study: Community based cross sectional observation study.

Place of Study: The study was undertaken among the age group of 15-49 yrs old females in the OPD of dept. of Obst & Gynae, Govt Medical college, Kannauj, distt. Tirwa U.P.

Duration of Study: one year.

Study Population: 543 women of reproductive age group from OPD of dept. of Obs & Gynae were selected randomly.

Study Tool: A predesigned, pretested questionnaire.

Methodology: After taking permission from college authority and HOD Obs & Gynae, randomly the females were selected in between the age group of 15-49 years they were explained the aim of the study and verbal consent was taken. The questionnaire provided to them was explained well. The predesigned and structured questionnaire included their knowledge about menstruation the information regarding hygiene with practices, during menses their awareness regarding the changes physically and mentally. At the end of the study after collection of the questionnaire, all their queries were answered satisfactorily by research worker.

Statistical analysis: Data obtained were analyzed by simple statistical proportion.

Table 1: Practice of menstrual hygiene of reproductive age group women.

Practice	Number (%)
Absorbant used during menstruation.	
(a) Sanitary Napkins	336(62%)
(b) Old Clothes	48(9%)
(c) New Clothes	97(18%)
(d) Both Old & New	62(11%)
Disposal of Menstrual Absorbant	
(a) Toilet	43 (12.79%)
(b) Open	235 (70%)
(c) Dustbin by rapping with paper	18(5.35%)
(d) Dustbin by rapping without paper	40 (11.90%)
Genitalia Cleaning During Menses	
(a) Water	385(70.90%)
(b) Soap	119(21.91%)
(c) Dettol	32(5.89%)
(d) V Wash	7 (1.28%)
Bathing during Menstruation	495 (91.16%)
Hand Washing during Menstruation	466 (85.81%)

Table.1: Depicts hygienic practices during menstruation. Where 62% uses sanitary pads & 9%, 18% & 11% uses old clothes, new cloth & both old & new cloth respectively. About cleanliness 91.16% takes bath everyday & 85.81% does hand washing. Most of them 71% maintain cleanliness with water. 70% uses open disposal method for disposal of menstrual absorbent.

Observation

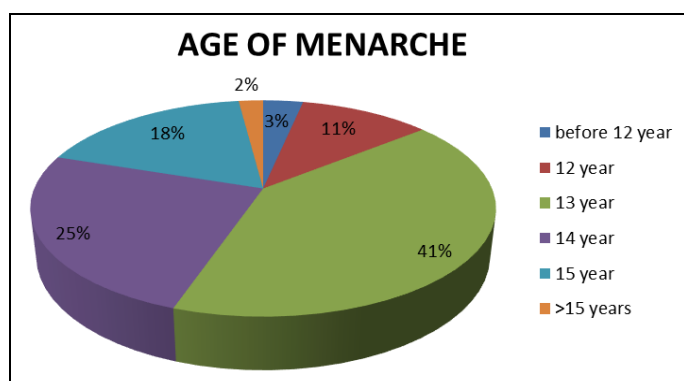


Fig 1: The result shows that the mean age of menarche is 13 years (41%) followed by 14 years (25%) and 15 years (18%).

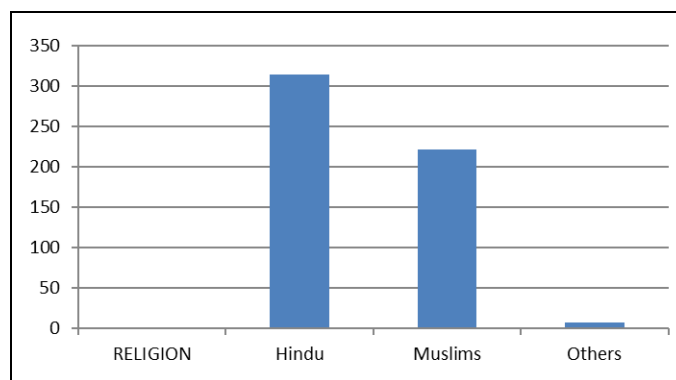


Fig 2: Shows that 69 % (314) of the girls were Hindu and 30% (222) were Muslims

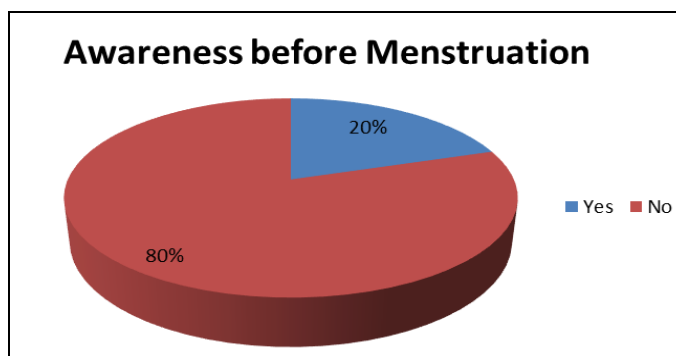


Fig 3: Depicts only 20% girls were aware about menstruation before menarche. & 80 had no knowledge about it.

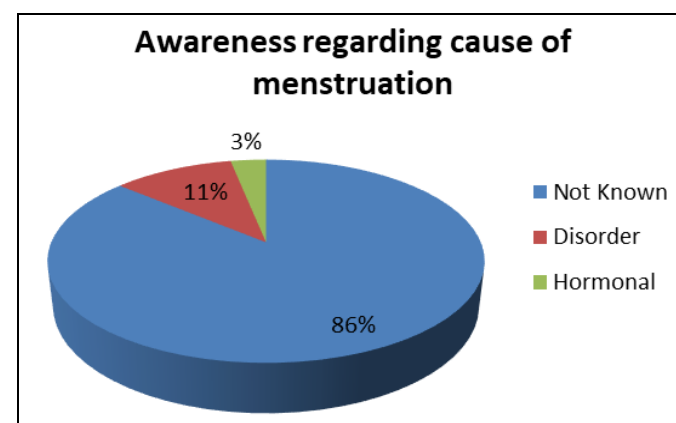


Fig 4: 86% do not know the cause of menstruation, 11% thinks it is due to some disorder and 3% thinks it is hormonal.

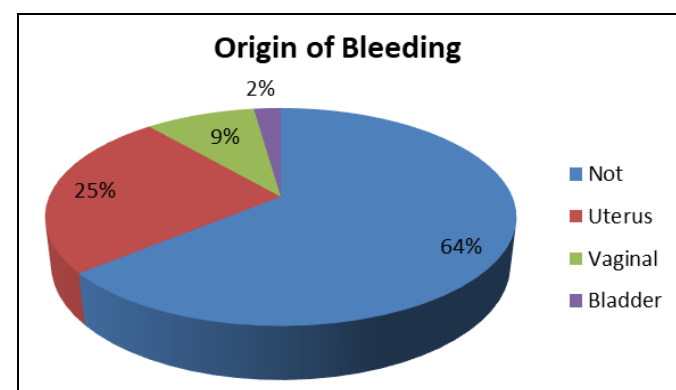


Fig 5: Suggests 64% have no knowledge regarding origin of bleeding during menstruation 9% & 2% thinks it comes from vagina & bladder respectively.

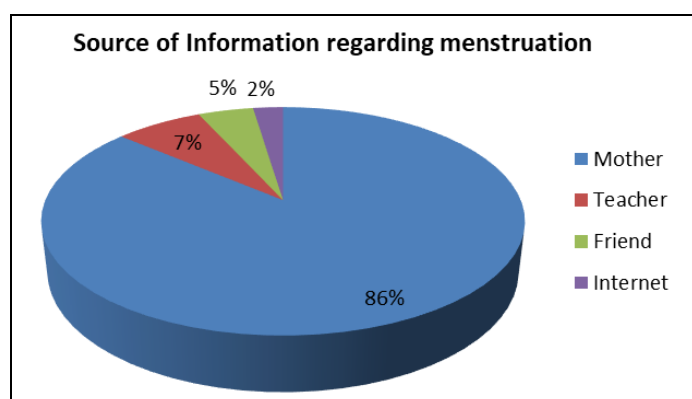


Fig 6: Shows most of them 86% gained knowledge regarding menstruation from mother.

Table 2: Experience of restrictions during menstruation

Table	Number (%)
Restrictions of Religion Act	453(83.42%)
Restrictions for playing	232(42.72%)
Restrictions for travelling	246(45.30%)
Not attending school	98(18.04%)
Not taking bath	49(9.02%)
Not going to kitchen	219(40.33%)

Table.2: Shows that restriction the girls have to face during menstruation like 83.42% do not do religious act. and 45.30% do not travel, 42.72% do not play, 40.33% do not go to kitchen, 18.04% do not attend school 9.02% do not take bath.

Table 3: Reason behind not using sanitary pads from market

Table	Number (%)
Have no idea	109(52.65%)
Costly	49(23.67%)
Not very useful	36(17.39%)
Shy about buying	52(25.12%)
No place for disposal	58(28.01%)

Table.3: Shows 52.65% of females have no idea about sanitary pads, where 23.67% say it is costly 17.39% thinks it is costly, 25.12% are shy about buying and 28.01% find no place for disposal.

Discussion

Most of the girls (72%) were unaware regarding the cause of menstruation this might be because of social taboo and nobody discuss much about menstruation. The reproductive health is not taught in educational curriculum which makes this gap. Similar finding also revealed in Khan *et al*,^[4] 72%.

It is desirable that before attainment of menstrual changes, the girls should be educated about importance and significance, the physiological aspects related to it and hygienic practices to be followed during menstruation.

The main epitome of knowledge is mother (86%). Daughters feel much more at ease discussing their changing physical and physiological health with their mother. But the next best could be teachers by conducting awareness. Sessions of menstrual hygiene by incorporating it into curriculum. Munday *et al*;^[5] also has shown the same. It was observed in the study that 64% has no knowledge regarding the origin of menstrual bleeding 11% think it is due to same disorder. Where a similar study conducted in Rajasthan by Khanna *et al*^[6] nearly 70% believed that the menstruation was not natural process. Only 25% knew it was from uterus.

This awareness might because of poor literacy used or absence of health education regarding menstruation at the level of educational institution.

Here 62% of the girls were using sanitary pads as menstrual absorbent. Which is a very positive observation as compared to the study by Khanna *et al*.^[6] where three forth of the girls used old cloth during their periods only one forth used sanitary pads. This might be because of introduction of low cost sanitary pads and the government initiative along with some NGOs provide healthy menstrual environment. Cleanliness is one of the most important aspect of preventing RTIS. In the present study 91% were taking bath everyday and 86% were doing hand washing. Which is very satisfactory in comparison to the result found by Thakre *et al*;^[7] (58%) 70% Of girls used open disposal method of sanitary pads in contraing with Thakre *et al*.^[7] where more than 90% were either throwing pads in garbage or burning.

More than 80% reported that they were refrained from religious work which was observed in other studies like Thakre *et al*;^[7] Gosai *et al*.^[8]

Conclusion

Most of the women in reproductive age group are unaware of physiology of menstruation and its safe and hygienic practices. As the mother plays the pivotal role as a informer inflicting primary knowledge and hygiene practices regarding menstruation, so the mother need to be provided with proper and adequate knowledge along with that school health awareness program should incorporate reproductive health & prevention of RTI in their curriculum. The sanitary pads should be of low cost so that everybody could avail it along with the do's and don'ts with it should be communicated well.

Thus the above findings directs us towards the need of eliminating the old traditional beliefs, misconception and restrictions and further more encouraging safe and hygiene menstrual practices.

Conflict of interest: All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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