

# Knowledge, Attitude & Practise Regarding Emergency Contraceptive Pills

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## ABSTRACT

India's population as per Unique Identification Aadhar India (UIDAI) 2020 census is about 1.40 billion. Even though a wide variety of contraceptive way outs are available in India, still the contraceptive prevalence in the country stands at 53.5 percent as per Ministry of Health and family welfare statistics 2019. Most of the couples in India do not make use of contraceptive method on a long-term basis hence unwanted and unplanned pregnancies are common. Emergency Contraceptive Pills are largely underutilized in India resulting in women resorting to unsafe or illegal abortions contributing 8 percent to the overall cause of maternal mortality in India, which if taken correctly can reduce the risk of an unintended pregnancy to an optimal range of 75-79 percent. The intention behind this study is to assess knowledge, attitude & practice of emergency contraceptive pills among college going students of progenerative age group.

## METHODS

A cross sectional study was conducted among 100 college students of reproductive age group. Data was collected through online mode using an anonymous pretested structured questionnaire by employing convenient sampling technique.

## RESULTS

Besides 180 subjects, 100 subjects gave consent for the study. Talking about contraceptive methods, only 34% had heard of emergency contraceptive pills. Of those who mentioned pills as emergency contraceptive method, 28% correctly verified and identified 72 hours as the time limit for use of the method. The summary index for knowledge disclosed that approximately half 50% had average knowledge about ECP. Though 66% had moderate attitude towards ECP, 36% of the total students had used ECP. ECP use was dominating among students who were married and also, among them who had good knowledge on EC.

## CONCLUSION

The study exhibited that the cognition on ECP among female students is on average mark and the method is still underused. Therefore, there is a strong need to expand base and spread awareness regarding contraceptive methods in general and ECM in particular at college level.

**KEYWORDS:** ECP- Emergency Contraceptive pills, ECM- Emergency Contraceptive methods, Students, Sampling technique

## INTRODUCTION

India's population as per 2011 census was 1.028 billion, second only to China in the world. India which accounts for 2.4% of the land area is already

supporting around 17% of the world population.<sup>1</sup> The TFR for the country declined from 2.2 to 2.0 as per India's National Family Health Survey 2019-21.<sup>2</sup>

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About 210 million pregnancies that occur every year 80 million are unintended, resulting in 30 million unplanned births, 40 million abortions and 10 million miscarriages and only 60% of abortions done in unsafe conditions.<sup>3-5</sup> Majority of these cases are done in rural areas having inadequate facilities and done in an unhygienic and unscientific way. According to Union Home Ministry, around 37.6% women die every year due to abortion related complications. Most abortion-related maternal deaths are attributable to illegal abortions hence contributing 8% to the cause of maternal mortality ratio in India.<sup>6,7</sup> Estimates derived from data from the World Health Organization (WHO) predict that at prevailing rates, one in five women in developing countries will be hospitalized for complications of unsafely performed abortion at some time in their lives.<sup>8</sup> People at large have experienced the impact of population explosion on all spheres of life in modern society, perceiving also an unmet need of its control and regulation. Emergency contraception, a type of contraceptive intervention developed by research and trials during the last decade in order to reduce the occurrence of unintended pregnancies and abortion is one direction being taken to address the issue. ECPs are effective for preventing conception due to unplanned/unprotected sex. This helps to reduce unwanted pregnancy and associated abortions, maternal mortality and morbidity. For every act of unprotected sexual intercourse the chance of conception is about 8 per cent. Following the use of emergency contraceptives the risk is brought down to 2 per cent, a significant two third reduction in pregnancy rate. In the Indian scenario, where more than 50 per cent of the eligible couples do not practice any form of regular contraception and are unaware of emergency contraception, the percentage of women at the risk of conceiving, at any given time, is always very high.<sup>9</sup> It has been documented worldwide that introduction of a new contraceptive method increases the protection rate by approximately 3%<sup>10</sup> and availability of contraceptive at the hour of need is the major issue in addressing the unmet need of contraception. Department of health & family welfare introduced 'Emergency contraceptive pills' (E-pills) in the national family welfare programme during the year 2002-03. This contraceptive is used within 72 hours of un-protected sex. ECPs have been included in national family welfare programme and efforts are being made to utilize them at all levels of public health system. ECP has been included in the ASHA kits to address the issue of unwanted pregnancy at the community.<sup>11</sup> Emergency contraceptive are described as cost-effective form of "contraceptive first aid".<sup>12</sup> The Indian medical association advises that high

doses of combined oral contraceptive containing ethinyl estradiol and levonorgestrel (Yuzpe regimen) and copper releasing IUDs such as CuT 380A can be used as emergency contraceptive, but the drug controller of India has only approved (in 2001) levonorgestrel 0.75 mg tablets for use as emergency contraceptive pills. On August 31, 2005, non-prescription, over-the-counter OTC access to levonorgestrel-only emergency contraception was approved.<sup>13</sup> Its availability as OTC drug had led to misuse and improper use of EC pills. There are no parallel educational programs to the community to give knowledge about EC pill. Moreover, no proper instructions are given to users by pharmacist at chemist shop. This product was approved as an OTC product to reduce the rates of unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion but the fear of its use and improper use has failed to achieve the objective. The objective of this study is to assess knowledge attitude and practice of emergency contraceptive pills among college students of reproductive age. Aim was also to identify barriers to the use of emergency contraceptive pills and to make public aware of indication, dose, timing, adverse effects, safety, efficacy, supply and over the counter availability of emergency contraception and counselled positively so that they develop positive attitude towards ECPs and freely practice in their daily life. At the same time all the females who are not aware or do not have specific knowledge about various modern method of contraception will be made aware. Such a survey would definitely reduce unwanted pregnancy and hence induced abortions in India.

## METHODOLOGY

**Layout:** A cross-sectional research design was used to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice regarding ECP among reproductive age group of college students.

**Sample:** A total of 100 students of reproductive age group from different streams or college were selected through convenient sampling technique. Before starting the process, students were well-informed and briefed about the layout of study.

**Tools:** Self structured questionnaire covered the following demographic point's like age, age at marriage, address, religion, education, total family income, socioeconomic status, no of living children, no of abortions and its reason, menstrual history. Knowledge questionnaire comprises trade name, action, time, interval dose etc. Attitude includes 5 point Likert scale to assess the favourable or unfavourable behaviour towards ECP usage. Practice questionnaire comprises age, duration, reason for using ECP and its associated side effects. The

respondents were also asked all types of questions which could help us to assess their knowledge, attitude and practice of emergency contraceptive pills.

**Ethical Permission:** Permission to conduct the study was taken from Principal of University Institute of Nursing, Jalalabad.

**Procedure of data collection:** Data was collected via online from google forms derived via google derive. Participants were fulfilling the inclusion criteria were enrolled in the study. Participants informed about the purpose of the study, possible risks, benefits and confidentiality of their information before collecting data via google forms. Written informed consent was obtained from study participants before conducting research.

**Results:** A total of 100 female college students participated in the study. The mean age was  $20 \pm 1.5$  years with the minimum and maximum ages of 18 and 32 years, respectively. Maximum 47% of the students were in the age group of 20 to 21 years. 54% of the respondents were from rural areas and 84% were unmarried. Nearly half of the respondents (45%) were from science stream accompanied by computer stream. All the study participants were heard about various methods of EC methods, but majority of the study participants (42%) heard of condom followed by ECP. 73% of the participants were aware about the easy accessibility of ECP and even though without any prescription. 55% of the participants tick medical stores as a right place to obtain ECP. (Table 1).

Table 2 assesses the knowledge about ECPs in study participants who have heard of Emergency contraceptive pills. 60% of the study participants knew the trade name of ECP was I pill with merely 28% of the participants knew the interval between two dose of ECP was 72 hours. Although 45% of the study participants had idea about its mechanism in preventing pregnancy by preventing and delaying ovulation. 48% of the participants had myth that it was always effective in preventing pregnancy followed by 27% participants who knew that failure can happen. Only 30% of the participants know that ECP's were not abortion pill. 56% of the study participants had idea that it should be taken within 5 days of unprotected sexual activity. The overall summary index for knowledge about ECP disclosed that around 50% had average knowledge, followed by 31% respondents had poor knowledge about ECP and its uses. Table 3 assesses the attitude towards ECPs. 42% of the study participants admitted that they will recommend ECPs to other females followed by 23% had neutral reaction with 44% said that they might use it in future if required. 36% of the participants agreed that ECP discouraged the use of other barrier

method. even though 37% admitted that they don't want to use ECP due to the fear of its side effects and also provoke riskier sexual activity. Some of the participants (34%) emphasise that cultural or religious belief didn't allow them to use ECP. Overall, the participants had moderate attitude towards ECP. Out of 100 participants who had heard of ECP's 36 had used it and shares the experience of those 36% of women. None have consulted gynaecologists before taking it and maximum no i.e. have taken directly from medical store guided by pharmacist. 9 (15.5%) had taken it after recommendation from their partners and 13 (22.5%) were influenced by media. Majority of the respondents marked condom breakage or slippage as reason for using ECP. 37 (63.8%) had menstrual problem out of which 27 (46.6%) had heavy bleeding in the subsequent cycle, 7 (12.1%) had delayed menses and 3 (5.2%) experienced spotting. 51 (87.9%) never had to gynaecologist after taking it but 7 (12.1%) did refer to gynaecologists. 53 (91.3%) found effective 05 (8.7%) did not find it useful preventing unwanted pregnancy.

## DISCUSSION

Although India was the first country in the world to introduce a National Family planning Programme as early as during the first five year plan (1951-1956) to control population explosion. the unmet need for family planning among currently married women is still percent in India.<sup>13</sup> Although in India it is estimated that ECP use is 53.5% while only 10% are using spacing methods.<sup>14</sup> Numerous contraceptive techniques both temporary and permanent have been introduced by family welfare department of India. About half of contraceptive pill users discontinue its use within the first year of adopting the method, and discontinuation is also high for condoms (45 percent). One-year discontinuation rates are also substantial for users of the rhythm method (32 percent) and withdrawal (35 percent), the methods with the highest failure rates.<sup>15</sup> This leads to exposure to unprotected sex even when not planning for a pregnancy necessitating the use of Emergency Contraception, to avoid the potential hazards of pregnancy The current study reflects that although 50% women have average knowledge of ECPs, the detailed and specific knowledge of ECPs are poor and misinformation is high. This was because main source of information was through electronic media or informal network such as friends and family members which are unreliable and gives limited information regarding effectiveness, safety dose, dosing interval, adverse effects, place to obtain, indications where it can be used etc. Surprisingly even the health personnel and medical staff are not aware that department of health and family welfare is responsible for implementation

of national family welfare programme encourages the utilization of contraceptive and distributing the same to the state/union territory. Similar study was conducted by Davis Prem et al (2020) with 758 students, out of that only 24% had heard about ECP. The commonest source of information was the internet 91 (49.7%). The knowledge level of about the EC was moderate (60.1%), and it was significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more among students  $> 25$  years old, married participants, students in private institution, of lower socio-economic status, Muslim students and days' scholars.<sup>16</sup> Present study concluded that 66% had moderate attitude towards ECP while none of the females had a strongly positive attitude for ECPs and most of them did not favour its availability as an OTC may be because they thought it might be misused by younger generation and would encourage unsafe sexual relationship and believed that availability with prescription would rather be more effective contraception. Parents and society do not feel comfortable discussing sexuality and reproductive health matters with their daughters thinking it would divert and misguide them. Similar findings has been reported by Singh Vinita et al (2014) via convenient sampling, with 300 participants. Around 56% women had heard of emergency contraceptive pills but only 19.3% had ever used it. Majority of the participants had neutral attitude about ECP due to cultural or religious barrier and high risk sexual behaviour among youth.<sup>17</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Awareness among the reproductive age groups students through mass media is likely to generate public demand for EC and also needed to be adequately educated and informed about ECPs to make this method successful. OTC supply of ECPs without prescription but with pharmacist counselling may increase reduction of unintended pregnancy and abortion. However, keeping in mind the changing sexual behaviour of the younger generation, a formal training of the doctors and paramedical staff and preparing guidelines on EC use would be a right step. EC services through all major sectors of service provision in line with awareness creation and incorporation of RH programs and educational campaigns at schools, youth organizations, colleges where access could be facilitated to this vulnerable group so as to reduce unsafe abortion in India. Potential clients should be educated about the reproductive health and EC method at school or college level, even though the topic of emergency contraceptive methods in their education curriculum also. We strongly recommend that strategies to promote ECP use be focussed on spreading accurate information through formal education and

communication by medical and paramedical personnel's and through audio-visual media which could provide reliable and accurate knowledge on ECPs.

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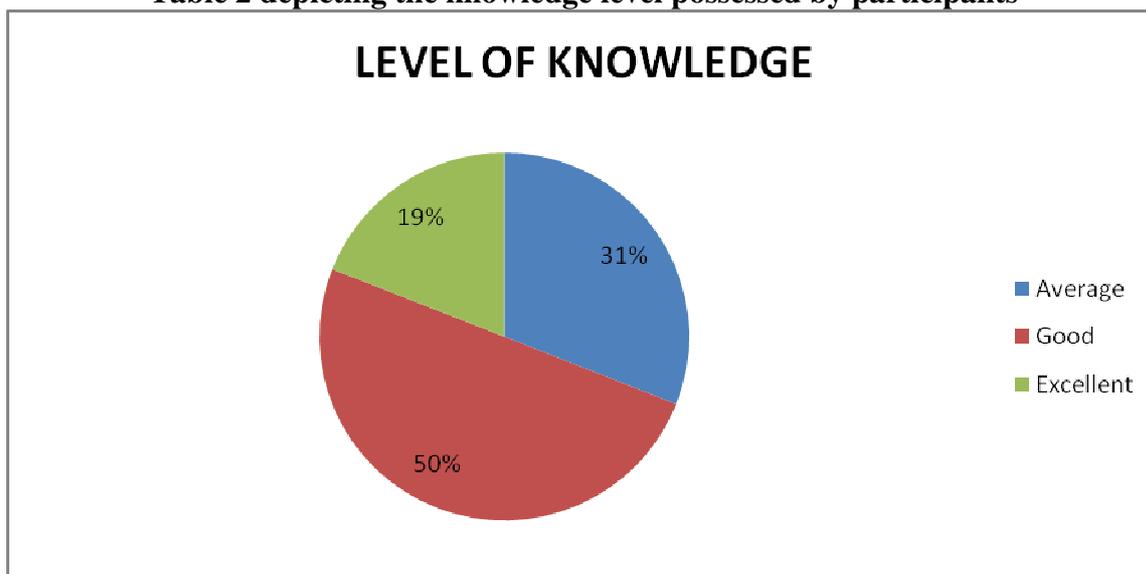
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S. No	Sample Characteristics	f(n)	Percentage
a)	<b>Age in years</b> 18-19 20-21 22-23 Above 24	9 47 23 17	9% 47% 23% 17%
b)	<b>Residence</b> Urban Rural USA	42 54 4	42% 54% 4%
c)	<b>Religion</b> Hindu Muslim Sikh Christian	38 3 52 5	38% 3% 52% 55
d)	<b>Course studying</b> Bachelor of science Bachelor of commerce Bachelor in computer application Bachelor in business management	45 10 30 15	45% 10% 30% 15%
e)	<b>In which year study</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> year 2 <sup>nd</sup> year 3 <sup>rd</sup> year Final year	10 19 39 32	10% 19% 39% 32%
f)	<b>Marital status</b> Married Unmarried	16 84	16% 84%

g)	<b>Knowledge of various method</b>		
	Any modern method	22	22%
	Condom	42	42%
	IUD	2	2%
h)	<b>ECP is easily accessible</b>		
	Yes	73	73%
	No	9	9%
	Don't know	18	18%

**Table-1** Frequency and percentage distribution of college student of reproductive age group according to their demographic variables

**Table 2** depicting the knowledge level possessed by participants



**Table 3** assess the level of attitude of participant towards ECP

