

A study on medical students of knowledge regarding contraception

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Abstract

Objective. Adolescent sexual activity, early pregnancy, induced abortion and increased human immunodeficiency virus infection have become a major concern nowadays. Teenage pregnancy is a risk factor for disruption of education, future unemployment and poor mental health. The aim of this study was to assess the level of knowledge and practice of contraception among faculty students from Craiova the capital city of south-west Romania. **Methods.** A descriptive study, using a pre-tested questionnaire was used to assess the knowledge and practice of contraception among 266 women students from faculty of medical assistance (72.93%), midwives (19.17%) and balneo-physiokinetotherapy (7.89%) aged between 19 and 47 years. This set of questions was completed willingly, anonymously and with the subject's consent to use the results for improving the faculty curricula. **Results.** A total of 266 questionnaires were returned in good order. Analysis of data obtained showed that 77.14% of students have a stable partner, 20.71% presented a history of gynecological conditions, most often with inflammatory pelvic processes, 1.07% suffered from sexual disease and 37% have never carried out a bacteriological examination of the vaginal pathology. As far as the reasons for choosing one method or another, the data reveal that the choice of the contraceptive method was based on the fact that it is a practical method (44%), it has been recommended by someone (14%) or other method being unknown 3%. About 46.43% do not used contraceptive methods in comparison with 50.71% who used it. **Conclusions.** Awareness and use of contraception among faculty students in Craiova was low. There is a growing need to educate adolescents about the use of contraception and we encourage the health education program to sustain the incorporation into faculties' curricula information's regarding knowledge and practice of contraception. **Keywords:** contraception, contraceptive methods, emergency contraception

Introduction

The aim of the study was to analyze the knowledge concerning contraception among students preparing to become midwives or nurses, before they took any classes on this subject, with the purpose to correlate the curricula with its necessities and requirements. Contraceptive management in women need to accord patient lifestyle and coexisting medical issues⁽¹⁾.

Methods

Our group elaborated, a questionnaire, answered by 266 women students from 3 programs: the faculty of medical assistance, midwives and balneo-physiokinetotherapy (BFT) who have not attended the training curriculum on contraception up to date.

Questionnaire was comprised by a section with general information about the subjects and a section which refers to and includes questions about sexual life debut, number of partners, stable partners, and any other gynecologic pathology. Furthermore, students had to respond if they conducted laboratory tests like Pap vaginal smear test.

The questionnaire continues with information regarding contraception, whether they use or not a family planning method, or the way it was recommended. An important way looking at the knowledge of one about contraception were the questions regarding access to a family planning office and what about the services were.

We designed questions about emergency contraception, as well as methods used or the rate of failure about administering rate of oral contraceptives, if lab tests were performed, as well on the level of knowledge on how various contraceptive methods.

Results

After finishing completing the questionnaire, all 266 subjects responded affirmatively to the question regarding the necessity of providing current and complete information on contraception and have formulated their expectations of study programs on contraception.

From the general data analysis, the subjects who answered the questionnaire were women. The age of the subjects was between 19 and 47 years. From all the subjects, 193 (over 72%) are between 20 and 25 years old and only 19 (7%) are over 30. This aspect is important to point out, for a better understanding and interpretation of the results (Figure 1).

The social environment of the subjects was in 73.92% cases urban, and in 20.71% rural. The questionnaire was answered by 266 students: 194 (72.93 %) from the program of the medical nurses, 51 (19.17%) from the midwives faculty and 21 (7.89%) from the BFKT enrolled in the first, second and third year. This separation was made to exclude those who are already taking courses on contraception (the fourth year students). The subjects were informed about

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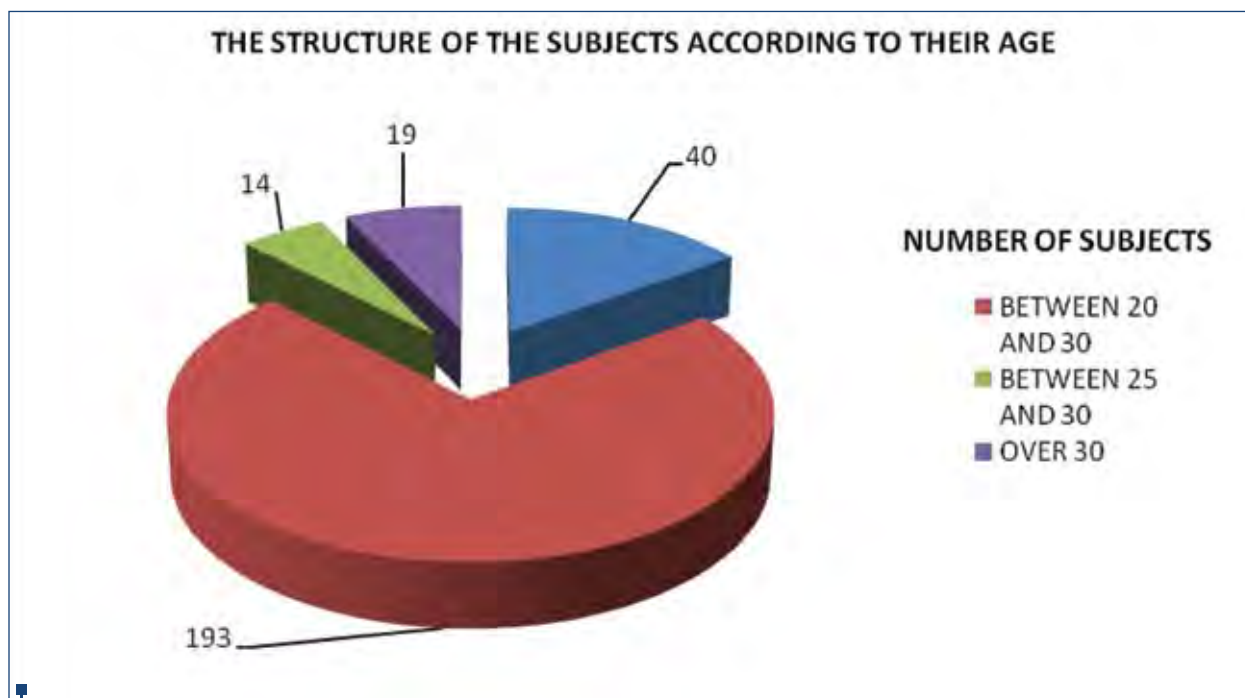


Figure 1. Structure of the subjects included in the study and their age

the anonymous and willing aspect of the results and agreed with the use of the data for interpretation.

By analyzing the health state, we observed that there was no significant family history, fact explained by the age of the subjects. Regarding the contraindications of a contraceptive method, one person declared to have varices, two person's obesity and 32 students declared to be smokers (Figure 2)⁽²⁾.

A number of 77.14% of the subjects have a stable life partner, which was explained by the moral rules of the family and by the great amount of time engaged in studying. The low number of sexual partners is explained by the fact that most of the subjects are married or have a stable life partner.

From the total analysis, 20.71% (58 answers) presented a history of gynecological conditions, in-

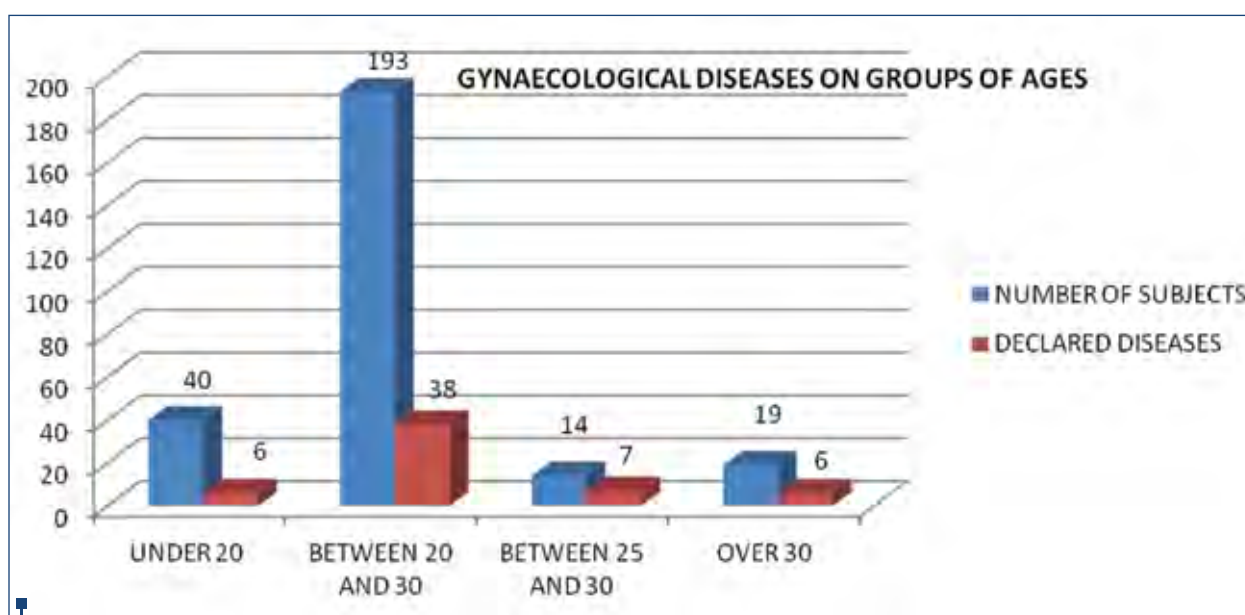


Figure 2. Gynecological diseases and groups of age

Table 1 Sexual contacts frequency

Sexual contacts frequency	Value	Percent (%)
No answer	25	9
Occasionally	66	25
None	18	7
Once a month	26	10
Weekly, several times	130	49
Every day	1	-

inflammatory pelvic processes most often. All of them followed treatments for their diagnosed conditions. A number of 3 (1.07%) mentioned that they suffered from sexual transmitted diseases for which they underwent treatment⁽³⁾.

It is worth noticing the high number of subjects who have occasional sexual contact or they do not have any, namely 32% of the cases, fact which would explain the resort to particular emergency contraceptive methods, condoms or the morning-after pill (Table 1).

Strikingly, the great majority of the individuals have never carried out a bacteriological examination of the vaginal discharge with only 37% who used a Pap test,

fact which could be explained by the lack of gynecologic pathology at this age, but in most of the cases, by the absence of medical information on contraception⁽³⁾.

Our results showed that the percent of those who use contraceptive method was only 50.71% and 46.43% who do not use it or used it in a very small number they do not answer the question (Figure 3).

Analyzing the type of the method used, most of those who declare that they are using the contraceptive pill could not tell its ingredients. Only 14 of the individuals could specify the ingredients and its brand name. As far as the contraceptive pill is concerned, first among the answers have been those who contain gestodene and ethinylestradiol^(4,5).

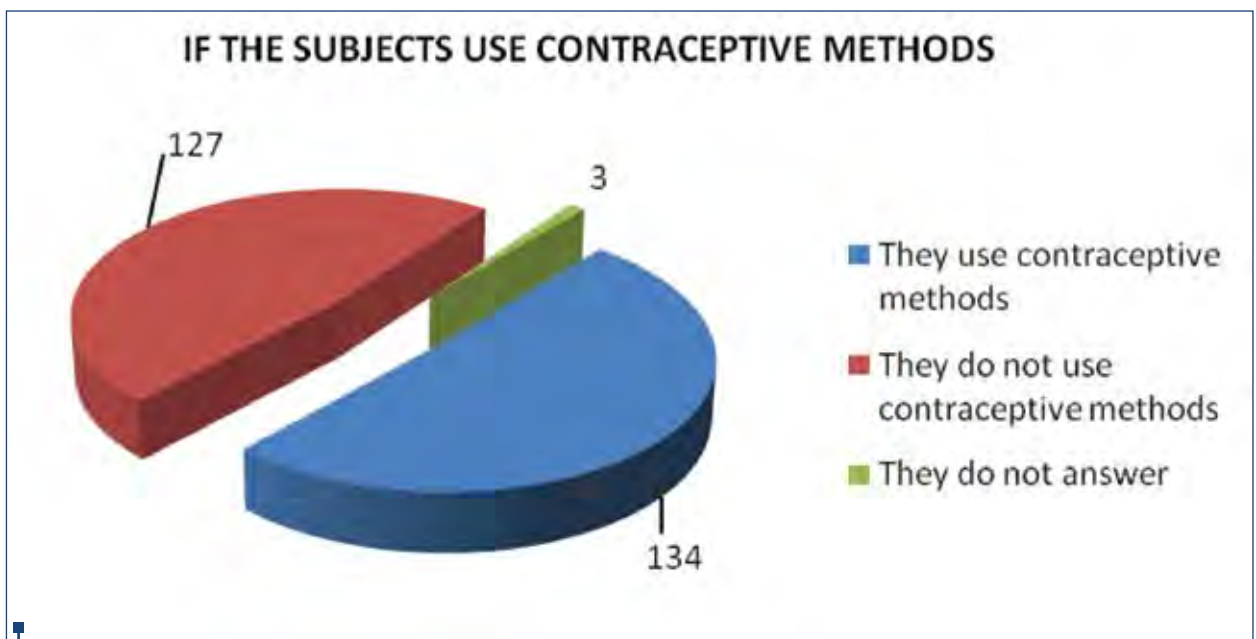


Figure 3. The percent of subject who used or not contraceptive methods

After having checked the awareness of the contraceptive methods, most of the subjects notes the intrauterine device followed by the birth control pill. Although they knew other methods, their number who applied it was extremely low^(3,6).

As far as the reasons for choosing one method or another, the data reveal that the choice of the contraceptive method was based on the fact that it is a practical method (44%), it has been recommended by someone (14%) or other method being unknown 3%⁽⁷⁾.

The birth control method was recommended in a small percent by the physician or medical staff, the choice of the individuals being in many cases a personal option.

The subjects were benefited, in a small proportion, by the services of a Contraception and Sexual Health Clinic including an examination, laboratory exams, other than vaginal discharge examination and Pap test and the monthly prescription of contraceptives. It was showed that 62% of the students did not have a qualified recommendation. There has not been any evidence of incidents or accidents with the used contraceptive method. The emergency contraceptive method has been used in our study in 33 cases.

The majority of the individuals stated that they are aware of the incidents and complications of the birth control methods and of those of the emergency contraception, but those who have been using the method did not suffer any kind of complications.

Unplanned pregnancies happened in proportion of 1.12%, all happening because of the inappropriate use of the condom.

As far as the relationship with his family namely the husband, and whether he is aware of the beginning of their sexual lives and the use of contraceptives the answer was affirmative in most of the cases.

By unmarried people the parents did not have any point of view when it came to the contraceptive methods and in most of the cases they did not know about the beginning of their sexual lives.

Discussion

All the subjects who answered the question about the necessity to supplement and assessing the way of teaching knowledge on this subject, consid-

ered to be necessary to enrich the knowledge about contraception^(8,9,10). Their expectations concerning the college study programs about contraception were: to receive a useful information regarding life and sex education; to receive new and complex information regarding the contraception and to be fully informed on all the contraceptive methods.

Our data showed that most of the subjects had a small number of sex partners so far as well as abortions or births. The subjects never had significant gynecological or sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, the gynecological exams and specialized laboratory investigations were practically non-existent. We found that the subjects do not asked the services of a contraceptive office and in the case they do, could exist some limitations about the consultation and free release of contraceptives. Significantly however, is the use of the emergency contraception, the pill of the second day, very often, compared with another method of choice. In our study, none of the subjects performed laboratory tests before taken oral contraceptive, and does not knew the mechanism of action of the oral contraceptives, and as a consequence, the subjects cannot compare the different methods of contraception. Moreover, all of them considered 100% necessary to enrich the knowledge concerning contraception.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study revealed that there is a dearth of information about contraception among faculty students in Craiova thus culmination in their low level of knowledge on the safety and importance of contraception in the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Even among the informed, detailed knowledge and practice of contraception was very low. There is therefore an urgent need to educate young students about contraception, with emphasis on new other methods employed and correct timing of use. There should be enhanced promotion of contraception to encourage their usage and making them easily accessible in hospitals, pharmacy stores and family planning clinics. Furthermore, we encourage the health education program to sustain the incorporation into faculties' curriculum information's regarding knowledge and practice of contraception. ■

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