

The Scope of Pre-Pregnancy Care Conducted at Health Centers of Tabriz, Iran: Women's Viewpoints

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Pre-pregnancy care is considered as preventive medicine related to pregnancy and delivery. This Questionnaire based study upon 384 women in the first half of the pregnancy showed the scope of pre-pregnancy care in the area of physical health was either weak (75%) or average (25%). All women declared that they had not received mental health-related care during the pre-pregnancy care. The scope of pre-pregnancy care in the area of life-style was categorized as weak, average, and good by 69.79%, 29.69%, and 0.52% of the studied women, respectively.

Introduction

Pre-pregnancy care is considered as preventive medicine related to pregnancy and delivery. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, all women should receive pre-pregnancy care throughout their pregnancy and undergo necessary evaluations and proper interventions if needed.¹ Results from most studies show poor pre-pregnancy care in Europe and America.^{2,3} Detailed investigation on such care in Africa and Asia, especially Iran, is very rare.^{4,5} The current study illustrated the scope of pre-pregnancy care and its physical, mental, and lifestyle-related aspects from the viewpoint of women in the city of Tabriz, Iran.

Materials and methods

Among 27 health centers and 53 health sites in Tabriz, nine centers and 18 sites were selected through simple randomization. Based on the number of referrers at fixed intervals, 384 women who were in the first half of their pregnancy and held high school diploma or a

university degree were selected using a table of random numbers. The participants were explained about the research and its objectives, provided written consent, and finally filled the questionnaires. A few number of questions remained unanswered.

The questionnaire was derived from screening checklists and pre-pregnancy counseling inventories developed by Hille-Meier et al.⁶ and Iran's Ministry of Health and Medical Education.⁷ The questionnaire which covered three areas of physical health, mental health, and lifestyle was validated by 10 faculty members of the departments of psychiatric nursing and midwifery (Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran). The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by using Cronbach's alpha ($r = 0.75$). Questions about all three areas were rated within the range of 0-100 and the obtained scores were classified based on a Likert scale (weak, average, good, very good).

The collected data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to assess the relations between individual-

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social characteristics and the scope of pre-pregnancy care.

Results

Among 384 pregnant participants, 7% were under the age of 20 years, 47.1% held high school diploma, and 94.5% were housewives. The mean (SD) age of participants was 20.2 (4.04) years at the time of marriage.

The scope of pre-pregnancy care in the area of physical health was either weak (75%) or average (25%). All women declared that they had not received mental health-related care during the pre-pregnancy care. The scope of pre-pregnancy care in the area of life-style was categorized as weak, average, and good by 69.79%, 29.69%, and 0.52% of the studied women, respectively.

Based on Pearson correlation, among demographic characteristics of the participants, only age had a significant correlation with receiving pre-pregnancy care, i.e. younger women had received less care ($r = -0.12$; $p = 0.01$).

Discussion

According to the results of the current research, the scope of pre-pregnancy care in the area of physical health is at a low level. This is in consistence with the findings of Heyes et al.² and Finer and Henshaw,³ but in contrast with those of Misra et al. in the US.⁸ Such difference might have been caused by sociocultural conditions of societies under investigation.

Tough et al. reported less than 50% of women are questioned about mental health before pregnancy.⁹ Meanwhile, none of our participants had received pre-pregnancy mental care. Moreover, the subjects in the present study scored lifestyle-related pre-pregnancy care mostly as weak. Heyes et al. reported comparable results.²

Similar to the study of and Finer and Henshaw,³ younger women in the current study had received less care. However, Whitworth and Dowsell found opposite

results.¹⁰ This may be due to the newness of ministerial instructions regarding the implementation of pre-pregnancy care in Iran.

In accordance with the above results, providing pre-pregnancy care must be seriously perused an implemented. To accomplish this aim, all the information technologies in the society should be used to enhance women's awareness about the necessity of pre-pregnancy care in ensuring their children's as well as their own health.

Ethical issues

None to be declared.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study.

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