

Study of Knowledge, Attitude And Practices Regarding Menstruation in Adolescent School Girls.

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Abstract: Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period in their life cycle that requires specific and special attention. This period is marked with onset of menarche. The girl experiences several problems during adolescence, and menarche is one among them. There is a substantial lacuna in the knowledge about menstruation among adolescent girls. Several research studies have revealed this gap and they showed that there was a low level of awareness about menstruation among the girls when they experienced it. The objective of the study was to assess knowledge, attitude and practices towards menstrual cycle and its problems among school girls. The present study was a community based cross sectional study conducted among the adolescent school going girls in the government girls high school of Moinabad Mandal, RR District. 8th, 9th and 10th standard adolescent girls who have attained menarche among these schools were included in the study after taking their due consent. A total of 292 children were included. Results have been analysed and discussed. Menstrual hygiene is an issue needs to be addressed at all levels. Awareness regarding the need for information on healthy menstrual practices is very important. It is essential to design a mechanism to address the access of healthy menstrual practices.

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I. Introduction

Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period in their life cycle that requires specific and special attention. This period is marked with onset of menarche. The girl experiences several problems during adolescence, and menstruation after menarche is one among them. In general, parents and teachers are health educators regarding reproductive health issues for girls in order to improve their health attitudes and practices. There is a substantial lacuna in the knowledge about menstruation among adolescent girls. Several research studies have revealed this gap and they showed that there was a low level of awareness about menstruation among the girls when they experienced it [1-3]. Social prohibitions and the negative attitude of parents in discussing the related issues openly, have blocked the access of adolescent girls to the right kind of information, especially in the rural and tribal communities [4]. Infections due to lack of hygiene during menstruation have been reported in many studies [4-7]. The objective of the study was to assess knowledge, attitude and practices towards menstrual cycle and its problems among school girls.

II. Methodology

The present study was a community based cross sectional study conducted among the adolescent school going girls in the government girls high school of Moinabad Mandal, RR District. 8th, 9th and 10th standard adolescent girls who have attained menarche among these schools were included in the study after taking their due consent. A total of 292 children were included. The purpose of the study and the nature of the information which had to be furnished by the study subjects were explained to them. This pre-designed, pretested and structured questionnaire included topics which were related to the awareness about menstruation, the sources of information regarding menstruation, the hygienic practices during menstruation and the restricted activities practice during menstruation. The demographic information including family details, parent's education, occupation, housing conditions, house type, toilet facility, and water supply in the toilet were enquired and then documented. The chronological age and the age at menarche were also elucidated. The menstrual hygiene questionnaire included queries about the type of absorbent which was used, its storage place, the use of clean or unclean napkins and the frequencies of changing and cleaning them. The information about personal hygiene included washing and bathing during menses, the practice of wearing stained clothes.

III. Results

The ages of the girls ranged from 12 to 16 years, with a mean age of 14.2 years. The average age at Menarche in the study population is 13.4 years. The duration of menstruation was 5.2 days and ranged from 2 to 9 days in the study group. Majority of mothers (71%) of the study group were illiterate (less than Middle school education). It was observed that 234 (80%) of the study subjects were not aware of the cause of the bleeding, 53 (18%) girls believed that it was a physiological process and 5 (1.7%) believed it as a curse from God. A majority of the girls [295 (76.23%)] were not aware of the source of the menstrual bleeding. A majority 225 (76%) of the participants were aware of the use of sanitary pads. The study on the practices during menstruation showed that 144 (49%) girls used sanitary pads during menstruation, 132 (45%) girls used old cloth pieces and 18 (6%) used new pieces of clothes. The cleaning of the external genitalia was unsatisfactory in 58.09% of the study group. With respect to the method of disposal of the used absorbent, it was found that a majority of the girls; 210 (72%) threw it with the routine waste, 65 (22%) burnt it, and 17 (6%) used other methods of disposal. Restrictions during menstruation were however common in our study population. 216 (74%) girls did not attend any religious functions or visit temples, 73 (25%) girls were not allowed to do the household work, 79 (27%) girls were not allowed to sleep on the routine bed and 20 (7%) girls were not allowed to attend their schools during menstruation.

IV. Discussion

Prior awareness regarding menarche and menstruation among girls is generally low in most of the cultures. Menarche is an important event in girls at the threshold of adolescence and ideally, mothers should be the main informants at this tender age of the girls. However, mothers were the first informants for majority of the girls. The fewer gaps may be due to the low literacy status of the mothers and small inhibitions for the mothers in talking to their daughters regarding the significance, hygienic practices and a healthy attitude towards menstruation. The latter practice will go a long way in maintaining a healthy reproductive tract for each and every girl child, who after she becomes a mother, will disseminate this healthy message to her offspring. The hygiene related practices of women during menstruation are of considerable importance, as they affect their health by increasing their vulnerability to infections, especially infections of the urinary tract and the perineum. The type of absorbent material which is used is of primary concern, since reuse of the material could be a cause for infection if it is improperly cleaned and poorly stored.

The probable reason for the girls not changing the pads could be ignorance and lack of facilities. Our findings are in accordance to those of other studies which were reported from India [8]. Further, the practice of using old clothes was found to be common among girls in the present group. It could be because of the lack of knowledge about healthy practices in young girls. Different restrictions were practised by most of the girls in the present study, possibly due to the different rituals in their communities; the same were practised by their mothers or other elderly females in the family, due to their ignorance and false perceptions about menstruation. The practice of the restrictions was significantly more among the rural girls as compared to the urban girls. This difference may be due to the lack of awareness in the rural areas and due to the association of more stigmas with menstruation in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas. These findings were consistent with those of other studies [9,10].

V. Conclusion

Menstrual hygiene is an issue needs to be addressed at all levels. Awareness regarding the need for information on healthy menstrual practices is very important. It is essential to design a mechanism to address the access of healthy menstrual practices.

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