

ABSTRACT

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The practice of Traditional methods of contraception continues to be high in Sri Lanka despite efforts by the National Family Planning programme to promote more modern methods. The rhythm or the "safe period" is the most prevalent of the traditional methods in Sri Lanka. Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods which are the more scientifically based methods of the "safe period" are gaining popularity all over the world. For effective use of these methods, users should be provided with proper information regarding their use. Since the majority of users, first receive detailed information about contraceptives from a health worker, it would be useful to assess the quality of information provided by health workers. Hence, this study was carried out to assess the knowledge and attitudes on traditional and natural methods of FP among female primary health care workers.

The study was conducted in the district of Puttalam with the full complement of female Primary Health Care (PHC) staff engaged in field work in the entire district as the study population. The study group comprised of 141 Public health Midwives, 6 Supervising Public Health Midwives and 10 Public Health Nursing Sisters.

The results of the study revealed that the knowledge of the PHC workers on both Traditional and Natural methods of FP was somewhat similar with a marginally better knowledge on NFP methods. The majority of respondents had a reasonable knowledge on these methods, while a fair proportion had a good knowledge. A small percentage of respondents knowledge on these methods was poor.

The knowledge of the younger, unmarried PHC workers with a shorter period of service appeared to be better than the knowledge of the married respondents with a longer period of service. The reason may be that the former group has a shorter time lapse since their initial training while the latter group has a relatively longer time lapse. Higher school education of the PHC workers, participation in inservice programs and reading literature on Traditional and NFP methods by them was associated with a better knowledge on these methods.

The majority of respondents were neutral in their attitude towards Traditional and NFP methods. A quarter of the respondents were in favour of these methods and they were the younger PHC workers with a shorter period of service. The attitude of a quarter of the respondents were unfavourable and most of them were among the senior PHC workers.