



**A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON HEALTH-SEEKING BEHAVIOR IN RELATION TO
REPRODUCTIVE TRACT INFECTION AMONG EVER-MARRIED RURAL WOMEN AT
RAU, MADHYA PRADESH**

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Introduction

Reproductive tract infection (RTI) is the infection of the reproductive tract. Due to the hesitation in reporting the symptoms and receiving the treatment from the health centers, there is a significant dropout. The health care-seeking actions of the women reflect the attentiveness of the disease in that community and the inadequacy of the health care facility. Since the women from the rural area belong to high-risk group for RTI, this study was conducted with the objective to assess the health care-seeking behavior about reproductive tract infection among rural women in the reproductive age group in Rau, Madhya Pradesh. Primary care physicians play a vital role in improving health care system, assessing the health-seeking practice helps in improvement and decision making and implementing.

Objectives

1.To assess the health care seeking behavior about the RTI among the ever- married rural women of reproductive age group in Rau, Madhya Pradesh.

Methods and Material

The total population of rural field practice area was 39,545, among which 19,065 were females. About 5,062 women were in the reproductive age category, and samples were selected by line listing. Antenatal, postnatal, and post menopausal women were excluded from the study. After reviewing several articles, the sample size was estimated to 292 and to account for non-response rate (among 15%) due to non-cooperation and non- availability of the participants, a total of 330 subjects were enrolled. Multistage random sampling was followed in sample selection and samples

were selected on the basis of population proportion to size. A structured validated questionnaire (DLHS-4 Survey questionnaire) eliciting the symptoms including menstrual hygiene as well as the health-seeking behavior was used as the study tool. The data collected was entered in Microsoft Excel and coding done for further statistical analysis. The statistical analysis was done using the SPSS software version 21.0. Chi-square test was applied for significance. P value < 0.05 was considered significant.

Result

Among 330 study participants, 166 (50.3%) presented with either one of the symptoms of RTI. Of the 166 women, 103 (60.8%) received treatment for their symptoms from various health care facilities and 65 (39.2%) did not receive any treatment in spite of presence of symptoms. The prevalence of RTI was found to be 50.3%. 60.8% of the affected females received treatment with majority of them in the group following home remedies. Significant association was noted between treatment seeking behavior, age, and the socioeconomic status ($P < 0.05$). It is noted that most of the participants followed home remedies (43.6%) as major treatment option, whereas general hospitals are given least preference in their choice of place of treatment with 19.8% due to the lack of awareness about the health care facilities available at the primary care level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, RTI was common among the females of reproductive age group in the rural community with a prevalence of 50.3%. This is mainly because of the reason that symptomatic patients do not seek treatment for their complaint which is due to several reasons like lack of awareness about the symptom of the diseases, stigma associated with the disease, poor menstrual hygiene and the personal hygiene practices, and also due to lack of the female physicians in the government sectors which makes them to follow mainly the home remedies or else visit the private practitioner. To overcome all these reasons, the females in the reproductive age group in the rural areas should be provided with regular health education regarding the symptoms of the RTI and also motivate them to seek required treatment for that particular complaint. Health education in the area of menstrual hygiene and personal

hygiene should be provided not only to the females in the reproductive age group but also to the females of the adolescent age group which helps in reduction in the prevalence of RTI.

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