

1C.3. Abortion Care for Adolescents: Which are their Needs?

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Background/Significance: The lack of knowledge and the failures of contraceptive use are important factors for the emergency of unwanted pregnancies in young adolescents. In Mexico the pregnancy rate among women from 12 to 19 years is 79 for each 1,000 and it is estimated that between 30% and 60% of these pregnancies finish in induced abortions. The 13% of all the maternal deaths in 2005 belong to adolescents. Unsafe abortion and its health complications are considered as a public health problem in Mexico and it represents the fifth cause of death (SSA (Ministry of health), 2007: 37-39, 70; ONU-México, 2006: 40-41).

When adolescents get pregnant, there are several risk factors that could derive into a spontaneous abortion. In Mexico the public health services are committed to provide quality of care to all women with spontaneous abortions and in all complications caused by induce abortions even if they happened out of the legal context. The National Survey of Health and Nutrition 2006, shows that the 8.2% of adolescents from 15 to 19 years have received abortion care sometime in their lives.

Nevertheless, in Mexico there are not yet significant advances in lineaments and procedures to provide quality abortion care for adolescents. For this reason the present study aimed to get information about the needs of abortion care of adolescents to contribute to the design of those health guidelines.

Main Question/Significance: The specific objectives of this research were directed to: (1) identify the needs of abortion care of adolescents through their own abortion care experiences received in public health services; and (2) get information of the position of health providers on this topic.

Methodology: The research population was health providers and adolescents from 15 to 19 years in an abortion situation and receiving care in public hospitals from the State of Mexico, Hidalgo and Mexico City from April to June 2007. We got the information through a qualitative approach applying in depth interviews to health providers and to eleven adolescents (from 15 to 19 years) in abortion situations. The analysis of the qualitative data was through the ATLAS/ti program which facilitated the categorization of topics.

Findings: The findings show that few adolescents received information of the existing abortion procedures, the way they are performed and the procedure applied in their specific cases. Health providers preferred to give the information to the family of the adolescents or to their partners. The adolescents' lack of knowledge on the steps to follow for abortion care is the factor that increases their fears on the abortion procedures.

There were situations in which adolescents identified negative attitudes of health providers and in those cases adolescents referred they were judged and mistreated. The lack of experience of adolescents in health services, as well as not being perceived as having the rights to ask for the service, are factors that impeded them to have confidence to ask questions and show their needs to the health personal.

The information derived from this study will be used to design lineaments for adolescents' abortion care, centered on what adolescents said they wanted from the health service providers.

Lessons Learned:

- Provide abortion care for adolescents centered on patients' respect
- Give awareness raising to health providers on the importance of providing care in an environment that allow adolescents to express their questions and needs
- Allow adolescents to be accompanied by family or someone confident before and after the abortion procedure
- Give complete and clear information to adolescents about the abortion procedure and the points of care when leaving the health service.
- Give appropriate care of abortion symptoms, mainly to pain management and hemorrhage.
- Train health providers on the characteristics and specific needs of adolescents in abortion situations
- Do not make compulsory the presence of family to provide the abortion procedure but ask the presence of other adult that is confident of the adolescent
- Motivate health providers to give information to adolescents on contraceptive methods in post-abortion situations