

P1.9. Utilization of Maternal Health Care Services among Indian Young Mothers: Factors Affecting and Actions Required - Manas Ranjan Pradhan, International Institute for Population Sciences, India; Usha Ram, International Institute for Population Sciences; India
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Background/Significance: In most developing countries like India, utilization of maternal health care services has remained poor in spite of increasing public and private concerns on the provision of advanced health care. In view of the poor status of women, high maternal mortality besides questionable quality of services, exploring the factors affecting utilization of maternal health care services especially among young women needs urgent attention in the broader context of reproductive rights and human ethics.

Main question/Hypothesis: The present study is an attempt to understand the utilization of maternal health care services and its correlates among young Indian mothers.

Data and Methodology: Data from the District Level Household Survey-Reproductive and Child Health (DLHS-RCH) conducted during 2002-04 has been used for the present analysis. The survey, which intends to provide information on reproductive and child health, family planning practices besides awareness about RTI/STI and HIV/AIDS in all the districts of India, follows a multi-stage sampling design to select the eligible women for the interview. The research findings are based on a nationally representative sample of 149297 currently married women in the age group 15-24 years. The data has been analyzed through SPSS 15.0 and our analytical approach includes both descriptive data as well as bivariate and multivariate analysis.

Findings: The study finds that less than one-fifth of the young women, who have given birth during three years preceding the survey, have received full antenatal care. Again, more than two-fifth of the young women have delivered their last child in home in absence of any health care provider. A large-scale regional variation in the utilization of services is another matter of concern. The study again reveals that about one-third of the young women (34 percent) have experienced any pregnancy complications. Likewise, about 40 percent and 32 percent of the young women respectively have experienced any delivery or post delivery complications during their last delivery. To make the situation worse, half of the young women experiencing any pregnancy or post delivery complications have not received any treatment. Again, majority of the young women, who have sought treatment for any complication, has sought it from a private health facility putting a question mark on the quality of services available in public health facilities. Multivariate analysis has clearly brought out that age of the woman, parity of the woman, education of the couple, caste as well as religion of the head of the household, standard of living of the household and place of residence of the household play a significant role in the utilization of various maternal health care services.

Knowledge Contribution: On the basis of the present study, it may be suggested that non-literate rural young women belonging to lower socio-economic strata of the society require immediate as well as constant attention of the government as well as the non-governmental organizations (NGO) to facilitate utilization of maternal health care services. Improving Information Education and Communication (IEC), more emphasis on education, efforts to improve the economic condition of the household, efforts to sensitize the grass root level health worker about the importance of maternal health and above all consistent monitoring and evaluation of the on-going programs may be considered as some of the crucial steps for the betterment of maternal health status of young women in India.