



CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Folic acid promotion and use in reduction of congenital malformations: Behavior change and awareness perspective in Indian public health context

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Abstract

Introduction and Aims: Congenital malformations (CMs) are a worldwide public health problem. The adequate use of FA by Women of Reproductive Age (WRA) seeking conception or not excluding the possibility of a pregnancy resulted to be insufficient throughout the country. One of the presumed factors is awareness level and attitudes of healthcare professionals recommending FA and preconception counseling WRA. To date very few studies have been carried out to investigate healthcare professionals' awareness about CMs and preventing measures. **Materials and Method:** The main aim of this research study was to assess the awareness level of healthcare professionals involved in preconception counseling for reducing CMs in Telangana state of India. A preliminary survey on a sample of 141 healthcare professionals was carried out in Hyderabad and Warangal districts of Telangana state, India. The instrument used for conducting the survey was a self-administrated questionnaire with 14 questions. Targeted populations were different healthcare professionals working in the private hospitals. **Results:** Majority of healthcare professionals identified smoking (64%), alcohol drinking (70%), rubella (94%), varicella and toxoplasmosis (97%) as risk factors for increased occurrence of CMs. Around 96% of the healthcare professionals know that intake of Folic Acid (FA) only from daily diet at Women of Reproductive Age (WRA) seeking pregnancy is insufficient, and 97.16% are well informed that additional supplementation should be taken. However only 60% of them are correctly informed on the appropriate time, when FA should be used as supplement. **Conclusions:** The awareness level of healthcare staff is almost at satisfactory level, and only few gaps were noticed, especially about recommendation of preventive measures and the right time to adopt them. To fill the identified gaps on specific aspects of healthcare professionals' knowledge, there is a need for actions and training strategies to update the staff. However, these preliminary results make clear the fact that the healthcare professionals' awareness level is not automatically translated into an effective transfer of information to women. Finally, further research studies are needed to advance in discovering the real causes of awareness predicting factors among women and modalities to increase it.

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