UNDERSTANDING OF EFFICACY AND FAILURE OF CONTRACEPTIVES BY IMMIGRANT AUSTRALIANS

Team V., Whittaker A., Manderson, L., Murdolo, A., Quiason, R., Gwatirisa, P., De Souza, R. and Estoesta, J.

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Introduction/background/issues
Unintended pregnancies due to inadequate understanding of efficacy of contraceptives may complicate immigrant women’s re-settlement experiences in a new country. Our project was aimed to explore immigrant and refugee women’s experience of contraceptive technologies in Australia, in relation to women’s willingness and decision making about reproduction.

Methods
We have conducted 84 face-to-face qualitative semi-structured interviews with immigrant and refugee women from various ethnic backgrounds and 14 interviews with family planning officers, bi-lingual health educators, community workers, nurses and general practitioners.

Results/discussion
All interviews with women were conducted by bi-lingual interviewers and research officers in the participant’s native language. Women’s varied understanding of efficacy of contraceptive technologies was one of the key themes identified in the process of analysis. Immigrant women interviewed were aware that some contraceptive methods, including lactation amenorrhoea and fertility awareness method may not always prevent pregnancy. However some were not as aware of the possible failure of other forms of contraception and shared their stories of failed technologies, including contraceptive pills, Implant and the IUD, in which they were confident. Dealing with unintended pregnancies, women were concerned that Australian health professionals rarely initiate the discussion on contraceptives and do not provide printed information. Health service providers stated that most immigrant women will less likely to terminate their pregnancy even if it was unplanned or unintended.

Conclusions/implications
Health professionals need to be aware about various levels of knowledge related to contraceptive technologies’ efficacy and failure rates. Initiation of the discussion on the related topic in health care settings and provision of printed information in women’s native languages may increase women’s awareness.

Key message
Guidelines developed by partnering organisations -The Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health, The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, and Family Planning NSW - will enable us to transfer these research findings directly into practice and have the potential to reduce unintended pregnancies among immigrant women.