

A study on the reproductive health status and service mechanism among middle-age women in rural China

Key Words: Reproductive health, Service mechanism, Middle-age Women, China

Xiaoming Sun

Nanjing College for Population Program Management, Nanjing, China

Background:

As the reproductive health/family planning program mainly focused on the young women's contraception for fertility control at grassroots services in rural China, the women aged 40-64 were lack of quality reproductive health services and had become a vulnerable group suffering RTIs and other women's diseases in rural China.

Methods:

A nationwide survey was conducted in 7 provinces to evaluate the reproductive health status and service mechanism among women aged 40-64 in rural China in year 2011. The cluster sampling method was applied. We first selected 1 county from each province, and 2 townships were randomly selected from this county, and then 2 villages were randomly selected from each township. 3458 study subjects, all women aged 40-64 in selected 28 villages, were finally recruited for the study. An interviewed questionnaire survey was conducted by well-trained family planning workers to evaluate knowledge, attitude and behavior towards reproductive health and service status.

Results:

93.6% of the study participants were at married status and 55.0% were already in or after their menopause period. 72.6% only had 6 year education or less and 65.1% were traditional farmers. 17.3% of them once left home for working in the factories as temporary migrant workers in their life time and the average length was about 4 years.

The reproductive health knowledge was not well disseminated and some misunderstandings existed among them. One third did not know woman's menopause and had suffered serious climacteric syndrome, in which 54.5% felt no need to see doctors. They tended to be not sexually active with a conservative value towards sexual life, and 40.7% of them thought no need at all to have sex after woman's menopause.

96.9% participants had joined new rural medical insurance system and received basic reproductive health services from township hospitals and family planning clinics. 97.0% of them once received contraceptive services and 81.4% were still in use, however, 26.9% had abortion at least once and 10.8% had abortion more than twice. The prenatal care for the last baby delivery in their life time was only 57.2% and 18.0% among women aged 40-49 and 50-64 respectively, and 60.9% of them reported no one visited them after baby delivery.

Among 1147 participants who used IUD as contraception, 21.5% of them did not have IUD removed after their menopause, and no one told them to do so. 57.3% reported they once suffered RTIs through physical check-up and only 41.0% of them had formal medical treatment. Majority of them preferred to receive reproductive health services from township hospital (26.8%),

township family planning clinics (32.1%) and county hospitals (21.4%).

Conclusions: The survey shows that large part of middle-age women in rural China are lack of quality reproductive health services, particularly in the period around their menopause. The family planning services are responsible to have IUD removed for women after their menopause, but the services are relatively poor. China is facing a new challenge of rapid population aging, so that a comprehensive framework of reproductive health and family planning services should be well-designed and the service priority for middle-age women should be focused, particularly for the women aged 50-64.