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RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN ASSESSMENT OF HYGIENIC PRACTICES AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS DURING MENSTRUATION IN RURAL AREAS OF ALIGARH

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ABSTRACT

Background Menstruation is phenomenon unique to all females. Hygiene related practices of women during menstruation have health impact in terms of increased vulnerability of reproductive tract infections (RTI).

Aims and Objectives The present study was conducted to assess the practices of menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls.

Material and Methods A cross sectional study was carried out in Rural Health Training Centre, Jawan, attached to the Department of Community Medicine of J.N. Medical College, A.M.U, Aligarh. The study population includes all adolescent girls in the area of age group 13-19 years who had menarche for at least one year at the time of study. A total of 70 adolescent girls in the age group of 13-19 years were included. The study was conducted from March – April, 2016. The data was collected by personal interview on pre-tested semi-structured questionnaires which consisted of specific questions pertaining to practices regarding hygiene during menstruation. The confidentiality of information was assured and their verbal consent was taken before collecting data. The data was analyzed with Microsoft Excel using SPSS software.

Results The present study was conducted in 70 adolescent girls of rural areas in Aligarh. Majority of the girls under study (80 %) do not bath daily during menstruation. 65.7% of them did irregular handwashing. Only 42.8 % did handwashing with soap and water. 90 % of the girls under study washed genitalia with water only. 92.8 % of the girls did not have separate bathroom. About 80 % of the girls used 2-3 pads per day. Out of 62 girls, 56.4% of the girls washed the menstrual cloth with soap and water.

Conclusion Majority of the girls have unhygienic practices during menstruation. This may lead to various communicable diseases among them. So proper training and education regarding reproductive health and hygiene should be given by Aanganwadi workers, health workers, family members and teachers to the young girls and it should be included as a part of school curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

WHO has defined Adolescence as the period between 10 to 19 years of age¹. The beginning of menstruation in a girl is marked the start of reproductive life. Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to all females.² Hygiene related practices of women during menstruation have health impact in terms of increased vulnerability of reproductive tract infections (RTI). The prevalence of RTIs is quite higher among girls having poor hygienic practices during menstruation.³ Many studies show that majority of the girls have poor hygienic practices.⁴ In 2011, 25% of the population constitute adolescents.⁵ Lack of menstrual hygiene can cause reproductive tract infections.⁶ Better knowledge about menstrual cycle and hygienic practices can reduce risk of Reproductive Tract Infections.⁷ Menstrual hygiene practices vary between rural and urban

areas. Good hygienic practices are very essential such as the use of sanitary pads and frequent change of pads.⁸ Only 29.5% practiced proper change of sanitary material (3 or more times) a day.⁹ The present study was conducted to assess the practices of menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was carried out in Rural Health Training Centre, Jawan, attached to the Department of Community Medicine of J.N. Medical College, A.M.U., Aligarh. The approximately population of this area is around 17000. The study population includes all adolescent girls in the area of age group 13-19 years who had menarche for at least one year at the time of study. A total of 70 adolescent

girls in the age group of 13-19 years were included. The study was conducted from March – April, 2016.

The data was collected by personal interview on pre-tested semi-structured questionnaires which consisted of specific questions pertaining to practices regarding hygiene during menstruation. The confidentiality of information was assured and their verbal consent was taken before collecting data. The data was analyzed with Microsoft Excel using SPSS software.

RESULTS

The present study was conducted in 70 adolescent girls of rural areas in Aligarh. Table-1 shows that majority of the girls under study (80 %) do not bath daily during menstruation. 65.7% of them did irregular handwashing. Only 42.8 % did handwashing with soap and water. 90 % of the girls under study washed genitalia with water only. 92.8 % of the girls did not have separate bathroom. About 80 % of the girls used 2-3 pads per day. Out of 62 girls, 56.4% of the girls washed the menstrual cloth with soap and water.

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted in rural areas to find out the hygienic practices during menstruation. 70 girls participated between the age group of 13-19 years. Table-1 shows that majority of the girls under study (80 %) do not bath daily. Only 20 % of them took bath daily. A similar study done by Adhikari P *et al* showed only 4% of girls took bath everyday during menses¹⁰. 90 % of the girls under study washed genitalia with water only. Only 10% of them washed with soap and water. In a study conducted in Andhra Pradesh⁴, only 4.6% of girls washed genitalia with soap and water and in a similar study in Haryana¹¹, 11% of girls washed genitalia with soap and water. 92.8 % of the girls did not have separate bathroom. In our study, 11.4% of girls used only sanitary pads, 34.2% of girls used new cloth, 28.5% of them used old washed cloth, 21.4% used pad+ old washed cloth and 4.28% used pad + new cloth. A study by Dasgupta *et al*⁷ in a rural community showed that most of the girls used cloth pieces than sanitary pads (similar to our study). Only 11.25% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation.⁷ Singh AJ *et al*¹⁶ found that only 0.4% women used sanitary napkins. Drakshayani DK *et al* found that almost all the girls were using old cloth as menstrual absorbent.² about 80 % of the girls, in our study, used 2-3 pads per day.

Table 1(n=70)

| Hygienic practices during menstruation | No. (%) |
|--|------------|
| Daily bath | |
| Yes | 14(20%) |
| No | 56 (80%) |
| Hand washing | |
| Regular | 24 (34.2%) |
| Irregular | 46 (65.7%) |
| Hand washing with | |
| Water | 40 (57.1%) |
| Soap and water | 30 (42.8%) |
| Cleaning of external genitalia | |
| Water | 63 (90.0%) |
| Soap and water | 7 (10.0%) |
| Facility for separate bathroom | |
| Yes | 5 (7.14%) |
| No | 65 (92.8%) |

Table 2 Distribution of respondents according to their practices during menstruation (n=70)

| Attributes | No. (%) |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Type of absorbent | |
| Sanitary pad | 08 (11.4%) |
| New cloth | 24 (34.2%) |
| Old washed cloth | 20 (28.5%) |
| Pad + old washed cloth | 15 (21.41%) |
| Pad + new cloth | 03 (4.28%) |
| No. of pads used in a day | |
| 1 | 4 (5.71%) |
| 2-3 | 56 (80%) |
| >3 | 10(14.2%) |
| Washing of menstrual cloth(n=62) | |
| Water | 17 (27.4%) |
| Soap and water | 35 (56.4%) |
| Dispose | 10 (16.1%) |
| Drying of menstrual cloth(n=52) | |
| In sunlight | 27 (51.9%) |
| At dark place | 25 (48.0%) |

The percentage of girls changing pads more than 3 times is 14.2%. And 5.7% of the girls used a single pad a day. In a study, most of the respondents (90.8%) changed the absorbent 2-4 times a day.¹⁸ In India, a previous finding in the frequency of changing sanitary materials shown 39.8% changed pads twice a day, 29.5% three times a day and 21.7% once a day (Alexandra, 2010).¹² Out of 62 girls, 56.4% of the girls washed the menstrual cloth with soap and water. A study showed that in tribal adolescent girls, about 96.9% have very poor menstrual hygiene (use of dirty cloth, improper washing of cloth and improper disposal of used cloth).¹³ Another study shown poor menstrual hygienic practices because girls do not get adequate time and opportunity to clean and change timely at school. (Report of Water Aid)¹⁴. A study by author Kirti in urban slum area of Guntur district reported 34.63% girls use of old clothes during menstruation.¹⁵ A study showed that 74.8% of the girls used homemade sanitary pads and 24% used ready made pads.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

Majority of the girls have unhygienic practices during menstruation. This may lead to various communicable diseases among them. So proper training and education regarding reproductive health and hygiene should be given by Aaganwadi workers, health workers, family members and teachers to the young girls and it should be included as a part of school curriculum. Education, television programmes, trained school/health personnel, motivated school teachers, and knowledgeable parents can play a very important role in transmitting the critical messages of correct practices about menstrual hygiene to the adolescent girls of today. Mothers play an important role in transmission of information to their daughters. Sanitary pads should be available at reasonable prices in the market.

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