



Reproductive Health Intern Abstracts Accepted for Presentation at the 2009 American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology Annual Meeting



Insight and Direction on Preconception Health Among College Aged Women

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Objective: To obtain insight and direction on preconception health from college and graduate student women.

Methods: Three focus groups were conducted. Pre and post questionnaires assessed preconception health behaviors. The groups consisted of a discussion and a survey obtaining demographic information, preconception health knowledge and practices. Comparative and descriptive analysis was performed.

Results: 13 women between 20–30 years (average age: 25) participated in focus groups. 38% (5/13) were White, 31% (4/13) were Hispanic, 23% (3/13) were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 8% (1/13) were biracial (African–American/Hispanic). 23% (3/13) were undergraduates, 77% (10/13) graduate students. In pre-questionnaires, 92% (12/13) knew about preconception health and 84% (11/13) felt it was important to them. After the session, 100% reported preconception health was important to them. Preconception health behaviors included: 31% (4/13) taking a multivitamin, 73% (8/11) using contraception and none smoked or used drugs. 23% (3/13) were overweight. Recommendations given for preconception health messaging included, having television commercials, incorporating messaging into television shows, utilizing Facebook and MySpace sites, preconception health-specific websites, and health education brochures. Images used should include non-pregnant college woman and seeing that woman in the future successful in her career and possibly pregnant. Having spokespersons they could relate to was also recommended.

Conclusion: The majority of these women had knowledge and perceived importance of preconception health although not fully practiced. Implementing suggested preconception health messaging aimed at college aged women can potentially promote current healthier lifestyles and help them realize the impact their current behaviors have on their reproductive future.

Assessing the Prevalence and Practices of Breastfeeding Among Young African American Women

P. Ebrahimzadeh, E. Woods MPH, D. Ramos, MD, MPH, C. Harding MPH

Objective: To assess the prevalence and practices of breastfeeding among young African Americans.

Methods: A series of six focus groups were conducted in November and December 2007 in Los Angeles. A moderator encouraged subjects to share perceptions about breastfeeding topics such as initiation/duration, support and cultural attitudes. Comparative and descriptive analyses were captured in a demographic survey given after the focus groups.

Results: A total of 84 African American women participated. Ages ranged from 15 to 41 years old (mean 22.2), mean education was 11.6 years and average annual income was \$10,652. Participants had 2.1 mean pregnancies and 1.3 mean number of children. 71% (60/84) had one or more children, 44% (37/84) were currently pregnant, 24% (20/84) were pregnant for their first time. Of those with children, 38% (23/60) reported breastfeeding postpartum, 2% (1/60) reported breastfeeding longer than 6 months and none reported breastfeeding longer than 12 months. Health, cost-effectiveness and bonding were cited as reasons for breastfeeding. Pain was cited as the primary reason for non-initiation/discontinuing breastfeeding. Social stigmatization, concerns returning to work and lack of convenience were other reasons for discontinuation. These qualitative findings were supported by the demographic analyses revealing decreased rates of breastfeeding.

Conclusion: The breastfeeding rates among our participants are up to 90% less than those recommended by Healthy People 2010. By addressing the reasons for breastfeeding discontinuation and promoting the reasons for initiation, efforts to increase breastfeeding among African Americans can be undertaken and the health benefits for mothers and babies can be attained.

Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Breastfeeding Among African–American Fathers and Grandmothers

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Objective: To assess the attitudes and influence of African–American fathers and grandmothers on breastfeeding beliefs and practices.

Methods: Four focus groups with fathers and grandmothers were conducted in January and February 2008 in Los Angeles. A moderator encouraged subjects to share perceptions about breastfeeding topics such as initiation/duration, support and cultural attitudes. Comparative and descriptive analyses were captured in a demographic survey given after the focus groups.

Results: There were a total of 10 fathers and 15 grandmothers in the focus groups. The age for fathers was 17 to 42 (mean 23.6), mean education 11.9 years and a mean of 1.8 children. 80% (8/10) reported having children, of which 50% (4/8) reported those children being breastfed. The grandmothers ranged from 33 to 73 (mean 50.0), mean education 11.9 years and a mean of 5.6 grandchildren. Of the grandmothers, 46% (7/15) reported their grandchild being breastfed. At the conclusion of the focus group, 93% (14/15) of grandmothers and 100% (10/10) of fathers reported wanting to encourage breastfeeding for the baby in their lives. Participants overall were positive and influential towards breastfeeding and gained knowledge about the practice through participation in the focus groups. Both cohorts reported needing more information in order to be more supportive of breastfeeding.

Conclusion: African–American fathers and grandmothers play an underappreciated role in influencing breastfeeding. They are influential decision-makers in the lives of African–American mothers and should be a target for breastfeeding messaging and promotion, yet self-report needing more information to do so.