

Over the counter provision of a knowledge-based method: Feasibility of providing the Standard Days Method in pharmacies

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

A growing number of couples rely on pharmacies for family planning, yet no evidence exists on the ability of pharmacists to provide fertility-awareness based methods.



Expanding the range of family planning options provided through pharmacies is potentially a cost-effective strategy to address unmet need.

The Standard Days Method

Expanding access to the Standard Days Method® (SDM) through pharmacies could reduce unmet need.

The SDM, a fertility awareness based method:

- Is for women with menstrual cycles between 26 and 32 days
- Identifies days 8-19 of the cycle as fertile
- Is used with a color-coded string of beads to keep track of the fertile days and identify days to avoid unprotected intercourse.
- Is 95% effective when used correctly.
- Is affordable, easy to teach, learn and use, according to operations research.



Methodology

One round of simulated client visits made to a randomly selected sample of clinics and pharmacies in study communities in Ecuador.

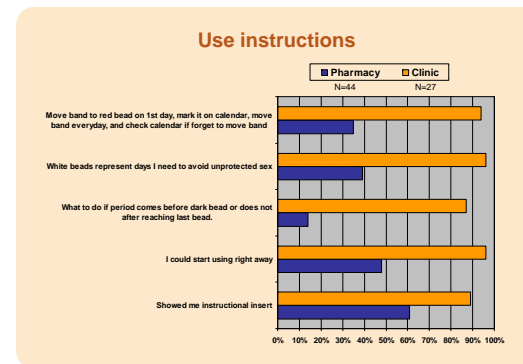
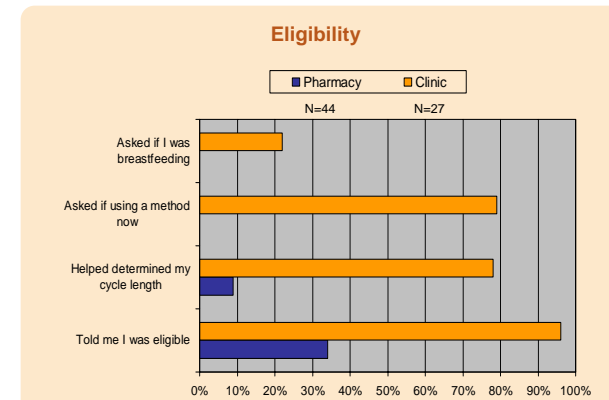
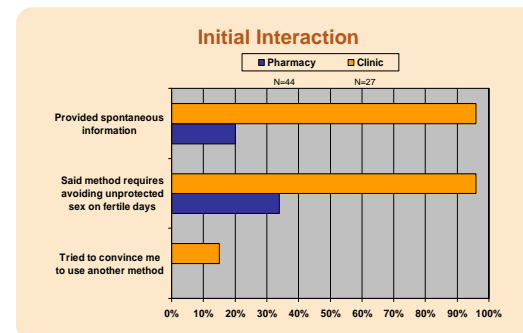
Sites	Ambato and Quito, Ecuador
Profiles	1 Eligible 1 Not eligible
Facilities	44 Pharmacies 27 Clinics
Visits	88 Pharmacy visits 54 Clinic visits

Counseling Methodology

	Clinic Providers	Pharmacists
Counseling time	20 minutes	5 minutes
Teaching aids	Clinic provider job aids	Instructional insert and calendar included with CycleBeads
Information provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses eligibility criteria Informs how to use CycleBeads and verifies knowledge Supports couple communication and managing the fertile days Gives client CycleBeads and refers to instructional insert and calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informs client that they must have cycles between 26 and 32 days Informs client that method requires avoiding unprotected sex on fertile days Refers client to instructional insert for criteria, use instructions, and questions Sells client CycleBeads

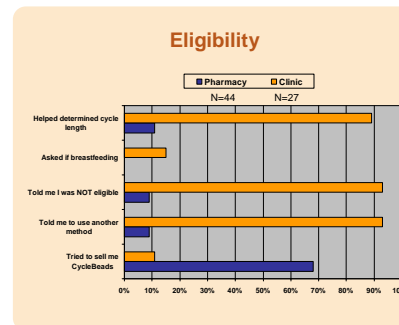
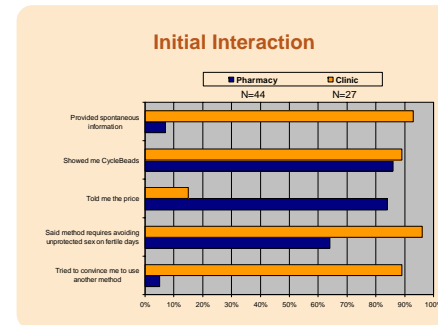
RESULTS

Eligible Profile



- None of the pharmacists tried to persuade clients to use a different method, as compared to 15% of the clinic providers.
- Almost 40% of pharmacists mentioned the most important criteria for SDM use: avoiding unprotected sex during fertile days.
- Clinic providers were more thorough than pharmacists in screening clients for method eligibility.
- At least 61% of the pharmacists showed clients the instructional insert, but clinic providers scored higher on all aspects of use instructions.

Not Eligible Profile



- Most pharmacists (85%) showed clients CycleBeads and mentioned the price.
- Pharmacists rarely provided information spontaneously, but when asked, the majority (64%) explained that the SDM required avoiding unprotected sex during the fertile days.
- Hardly any pharmacists discouraged ineligible clients from using the SDM.

CONCLUSIONS



Conclusions

- The quality of information provided by pharmacists on the SDM is not as good as the information given by clinic providers.
- Even though pharmacists are likely to sell CycleBeads to ineligible clients, most advised their clients to avoid unprotected sex on fertile days and referred them to the instructional insert.

Recommendations

- Clinic providers offer better information than pharmacists, but still require supervision to improve SDM screening.
- Pharmacists need additional supervision and motivation by visiting sales executives.
- Research is needed to determine whether pharmacy clients use the SDM as well as those who obtain it from clinics.