

Female Sterilization in Northern Nigeria

Dear Editor,

Female sterilization is the most widely used method of family planning.^{1,2} However, the reluctance to accept family limitation as normal and the deep seated aversion to surgery has affected its practice on a large scale in Nigeria.³ Ignorance and superstition based on religious and ancient principles are contributory.⁴

We undertook a descriptive analysis of 102 female participants who were sterilized over a five-year period. Total deliveries during this period were 9,946. The participants were divided into three cohorts. The first cohort consisted of 60 (59%) participants who had been sterilized during caesarean section. The second cohort consisted of 28 (28%) patients had been sterilized during surgery for repair of ruptured uterus and the third cohort consisted of 14 (14%) participants had been sterilized on request. Overall, in all three cohorts, the indications for sterilization were completion of family size in 55 (54%) patients and prevention of future obstetric complications or multiple caesarean sections in 47 (46%) patients.

Age, parity and level of literacy were effective factors on making the decision to have sterilization. In this study, the higher the age, parity and the level of literacy, the more likelihood the patients/participants would accept sterilization. This finding was similar to what was reported by Mitchel et al.⁵ We also found aversion for surgery and the cost were two major factors affecting the desire for sterilization, which was similar to what was reported in Zimbabwe.⁵

Having considered this background, a novel sterilization method that will be cheap, easy to perform and does not require general anesthesia can enhance the acceptability of sterilization. Public health enlightenment directed through our traditional and religious institutions and religious re-orientation is a necessary step toward the acceptance of sterilization as a method of contraception.

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