

Awareness and utilization pattern of well woman clinic services by target women in a rural health unit

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Introduction

Well woman clinic (WWC) services are under-utilized by target women especially in distant areas of Sri Lanka. Many factors including lack of awareness contribute to poor utilization of these services. This study evaluated the awareness and pattern of utilization of WWC by the target women in a rural community.

Methods

A community-based, cross sectional survey was conducted in 268 women aged between 35-65 years in Okewela health unit area in Hambantota district, selected using cluster sampling method. Data were collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire to assess respondent's characteristics, their knowledge on WWC services and barriers for clinic utilization. Knowledge on WWC services was assessed by scoring the responses and categorizing the cumulative score as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Data were analyzed using SPSS software.

Result

In the studied sample, 82.5% were aware about WWC. Majority (59.0%) heard it from public health midwife (PHM). However, only 40.7% of the sample had ever attended the clinics and 38.4% attended the clinic following PHM's request. Main WWC services obtained included Pap screening (100%), clinical examination of breast (95.4%) and blood pressure monitoring (95.4%). Of the non-users (n=113) 69.9% reported that they had never heard of WWC. Embarrassment (35.4%), fear of detecting diseases (36.3%) and unwillingness to be examined by a male doctor (28.9%) were the other reasons for not attending. Older age, being unmarried or employed ($P<0.001$ in all) and low income ($P<0.05$) of target women were associated with poor utilization of WWC. Approximately 47% of women had satisfactory knowledge regarding services of WWC. Younger age, being married, unemployment, being well-educated and a higher monthly income were significantly associated ($P<0.001$ in all) with satisfactory knowledge.

Conclusions

WWC services are under-utilized by majority of target women in the studied area despite having satisfactory awareness. Several reasons for non-utilization and high risk groups were identified. Awareness programs to empower women to utilize WWC services need to be commenced at community level.