“HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF WOMEN DURING THEIR ANTENATAL, INTRANATAL AND POSTNATAL PERIOD IN A RURAL AREA OF COIMBATORE DISTRICT:
A COMMUNITY BASED CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY”

Abstract

**Background:** Inspite of many National Health Programmes and Initiatives on Maternal health, still maternal mortality and morbidity tend to remain high in India compared to the developed countries. This has been contributed by poor health seeking behaviour and thereby underutilisation of the available maternal health services by women of reproductive age group in our country.

**Objectives:** To assess the health seeking behaviour among women during their antenatal, intranatal and postnatal period and to determine the factors influencing their health seeking behaviour in the field practice area of Rural Health Training Centre (RHTC) attached to the Department of Community Medicine, PSG Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Coimbatore.

**Settings and Design:** A community–based cross-sectional study of 270 women who had given birth in the previous one year.

**Material and Methods:** A validated semi structured questionnaire used to collect data on the health seeking behavior of the women who had given birth in the previous one year within the study area. The various predisposing, enabling and need factors which determine the health seeking behavior of women during antenatal, intranatal and postnatal period were
identified using the Anderson and Newman Health behavioral Model. The three dependent variables were Full Antenatal Care, safe delivery and Adequate Postnatal Care. The antenatal, intranatal and postnatal health service utilization by the women were expressed as proportions and percentages. Logistic regression analysis was done to identify association of the factors with the three dependent variables.

**Results.** The proportion of mothers who had Full antenatal care in the current study was 84.8% (CI 80.8% - 89.07%), the proportion of mothers who had Safe delivery was 100% and the proportion of mothers who had Adequate postnatal care was 61.1% (CI 56.9% - 65.2%). Factors like Community, early pregnancy registration, High Risk pregnancy and mass media exposure on MCH services were significantly associated with Full Antenatal care on multivariate analysis. Desire for the Pregnancy was the only factor which was significantly associated with Adequate postnatal care on multivariate analysis.

**Conclusion:** This study shows that though the health seeking behavior of women in the study area with regard to antenatal and postnatal care is better when compared to national average levels, it still needs to be improved. It is recommend that the extensive reach of mass media can be used to lay more focus on enhancing the health seeking behavior of the poorer and socially marginalized women to improve their health service uptake. Also, postnatal visits can be made mandatory along with immunization of the child as an eligibility to receive Conditional cash transfer schemes which may further increase the scope for seeking postnatal care among women.

**Key words:** health seeking behavior; antenatal, intranatal, postnatal; maternal service utilization; Factors;