

TRENDS IN THE UPTAKE OF MODERN CONTRACEPTIVES AMONG WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE IN THE BUEA HEALTH DISTRICT, CAMEROON.

LAYU DONATUS¹, TENDONGFOR NICHOLAS ¹, DOHBIT SAMA JULIUS² and EGBE THOMAS O³.

¹Department of Public Health and Hygiene, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Buea, Cameroon.

²Senior Lecturer, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Yaounde

³Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Buea, Cameroon.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Global progress in achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services is contingent on progress in countries where the use of modern contraceptive methods is still low among women who want to avoid pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa. A rise in the proportion of women of reproductive age having their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods will facilitate the achievement of other Sustainable Development Goals and lower maternal and under-5 mortality. This study aimed at determining the trend in the uptake of modern contraceptives among women of reproductive age in the Buea Health District in Cameroon.

Methodology: A retrospective descriptive study was carried out to determine the uptake of family planning among women of reproductive age in the Buea Health District. Data was collected from 7 health facilities selected through a randomized sampling method from the Buea Health District.

Monthly report sent to the district and the regional delegation were reviewed for a period of 4 years (2018 to 2021). Data was analyzed in the SPSS version 28.0.

Results: . A total of 336 monthly reports were triangulated with the DHS,2021 database at the regional delegation of health southwest region. The overall prevalence of contraceptive use in the Buea Health District was 24.3 %. It varied from 4.4 % in Integrated Health Center Buea Town to 46% in Solidarity clinic and Integrated health center Molyko ,each health facility selected from the health areas. There was a drop in the number of new clients at the family planning unit, as well as the number of women using natural contraceptive methods from 2018 to 2021. The injectable (22%) , Pills (20%), Male condoms (11) and implants (10 %), were the most employed methods of contraceptives with a decreasing uptake from 2018 to 2020. The least used were the surgical methods and female condoms.

Conclusion: The uptake of contraceptives among reproductive-aged women showed a decreasing trend from 2018 to 2021 with an overall low uptake. The injectables and pills are the preferred methods. There is a need for the population to be educated on

information about each contraceptive methods to improve the uptake of contraceptive use by women of reproductive age group in the Buea Health District.

Key Words: Trends, uptake, Modern Contraceptive, Women of Reproductive Age, Buea Health District.

BACKGROUND

Achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services advances progress towards achieving other SDG targets [1]. A rise in the proportion of women of reproductive age having their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods (SDG indicator 3.7.1), will facilitate the achievement of other Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, including lowering maternal mortality (indicator 3.1.1) and under-5 mortality (indicator 3.2.1) [1]. Reducing the frequency of pregnancy and childbearing at young ages will increase educational attainment (indicator 4.3.1) and contribute to reducing the percentage of women and children living in poverty (indicator 1.2.1) [1,2]. Accelerated action is needed to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, information, and education by 2030 [1]. Global progress in achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services is contingent on progress in countries where the use of modern contraceptive methods is still low among women who want to avoid pregnancy, most notably in sub-Saharan Africa[3].

Nowadays , more and more women and their partners are using contraceptive methods than before [4]. Between 2000 and 2020, the proportion of women aged 15 to 49 years who used any form of contraception increased from 47.7 to 49.0 percent [5]. During this period, the number of women using a modern contraceptive method increased from 663 million to 851 million. This increase was driven both by an increased prevalence in the use of modern methods (98 million women) as well as by the growing number of women of reproductive age (90 million). However, nearly 1 in 10 women of reproductive age have an unmet need for family planning [1,3].

In Cameroon, 63% of women who want to avoid pregnancy do not use a modern method of contraception [5]. In 2013, an estimated 40% of pregnancies in Cameroon were unintended. More than six in ten women who want to avoid pregnancy do not practice contraception or use a relatively ineffective traditional method [4,5]. These women have been affected by the ongoing Anglophone crises that has left them vulnerable. Some have gone into early marriages and others did not plan for pregnancy which is an additional burden to carter for a child. The need for family planning continues to rise especially as more women have fled severe crisis areas to the Buea Health District [6]. Hence, this study is aimed at determining the uptake of modern contraceptives among women of reproductive age(15-49yrs) in the Buea Health District. The findings of this study will inform an intervention study to reduce the level of unmet needs of family planning in Buea Health District and Cameroon.

METHODOLOGY

Study design and population

A retrospective study was carried out to determine the uptake of family planning among women of reproductive age in Buea Health District. Data on contraceptive use was collected from the monthly report of health facilities selected using a randomized cluster sampling technique in the Buea Health District (Solidarity Health Foundation and Government integrated center Molyko, Muea integrated Hospital, Health Unit Bova, 7th Day Adventist Buea Road, Regional Hospital Bokwango and Government District Hospital Bokwango, Government integrated health center mile 16, and Government integrated health center Buea town) . The family planning past records were reviewed for a period of 4 years (2018 to 2021). The study population consisted of files of all women of reproductive-aged 15 to 49 years who received family planning services in selected health facility of the Buea Health District over the past 4 years. The complete monthly reports of family planning services provided to women aged 15 to 49 years between the years 2018 to 2021 were included.

Study Area and Setting

The study was carried out in the Buea Health District (BHD), in the Southwest region, of Cameroon. It covers a total surface area of 870 km² with an estimated population of 180,843 inhabitants in 2021, living in about 37,995 households at the time of the survey [2,5,6]. It has a Regional Hospital (secondary level) which serves as the region's referral hospital, 7 primary care facilities, and a few private hospitals [6]. The BHD consists of 7 Health Areas, namely, Bokwango (13337), Bova (5633), Buea Road (51691), Buea Town (15577), Molyko (20998), Muea (62712), and Tole (10896). Most inhabitants of this division are predominantly youths, given that this district hosts some important higher institutions of learning in the region. Also, Maternal and child health indicators from the 2021 Cameroon Demographic Health Survey (CDHS) showed that the population in the Buea Health District has increased drastically from approximately 18000 in 2010 to 181 843 in 2021 [5]. It is estimated that 65% of the population constituted of women and young adolescent girls [6].

Sampling

Only hospitals that carried out family planning activities and submit monthly reports to the regional delegation of public health were selected for the study. Reports of 2018 to 2021 were reviewed and triangulated with the Demographic health survey over the same period. A total of 420 reports were reviewed from 7 health facilities with an estimated 60 monthly reports per selected hospital in the health area

Data collection

The data was collected using data extraction form designed to capture data on demographic characteristics and the types of contraceptive methods that women used. Only completed reports were considered.

Data analysis

All analyses were carried out in MS Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 28.0 for Windows. The contraceptive prevalence was calculated using the formula.

The contraceptive prevalence rate was calculated by taking the number of currently married women/ union who were aged 15 -49 using contraception years divided by the number of married women aged 15-49years.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the Faculty of Health Sciences (Reference?), University of Buea. Administrative clearance was obtained from the Southwest Regional Delegation of Health, the Buea District Health Services, and directors of hospitals or chief of center.

RESULTS

A total of 336 monthly reports were triangulated with the DHIS,2021 database at the regional delegation of health southwest region. Figure 1 shows the trends of contraceptive methods used over 4 years in the BHD. The trends in the number of new clients for family planning decreased in 2018 from 2,837 in 2018 to 1,679 in 2021 (Figure 1A). However, we noted a sharp increase in the new clients in 2019. Concerning natural family planning, statistics show that there has been a steady decrease from 649 in 2018 to 188 in 2021. The uptake of progesterone-only pills witnessed a spike in 2018 (1,828 clients) and a drop to 83 in 2021. Female condoms used increase in 2019 from 242 to 334 and increased from 147 to 281, and in 2021.

Estroprogestative pills (Figure 1B), witnessed an increase in 2019 from 806 clients to 982 and maintained the steady sloop in 2020 of 876 clients and then drops to 333. Since 2018, the morning after pills intake has reduced from 399 in 2018 to 231 in 2019 and 57 clients in 2021.

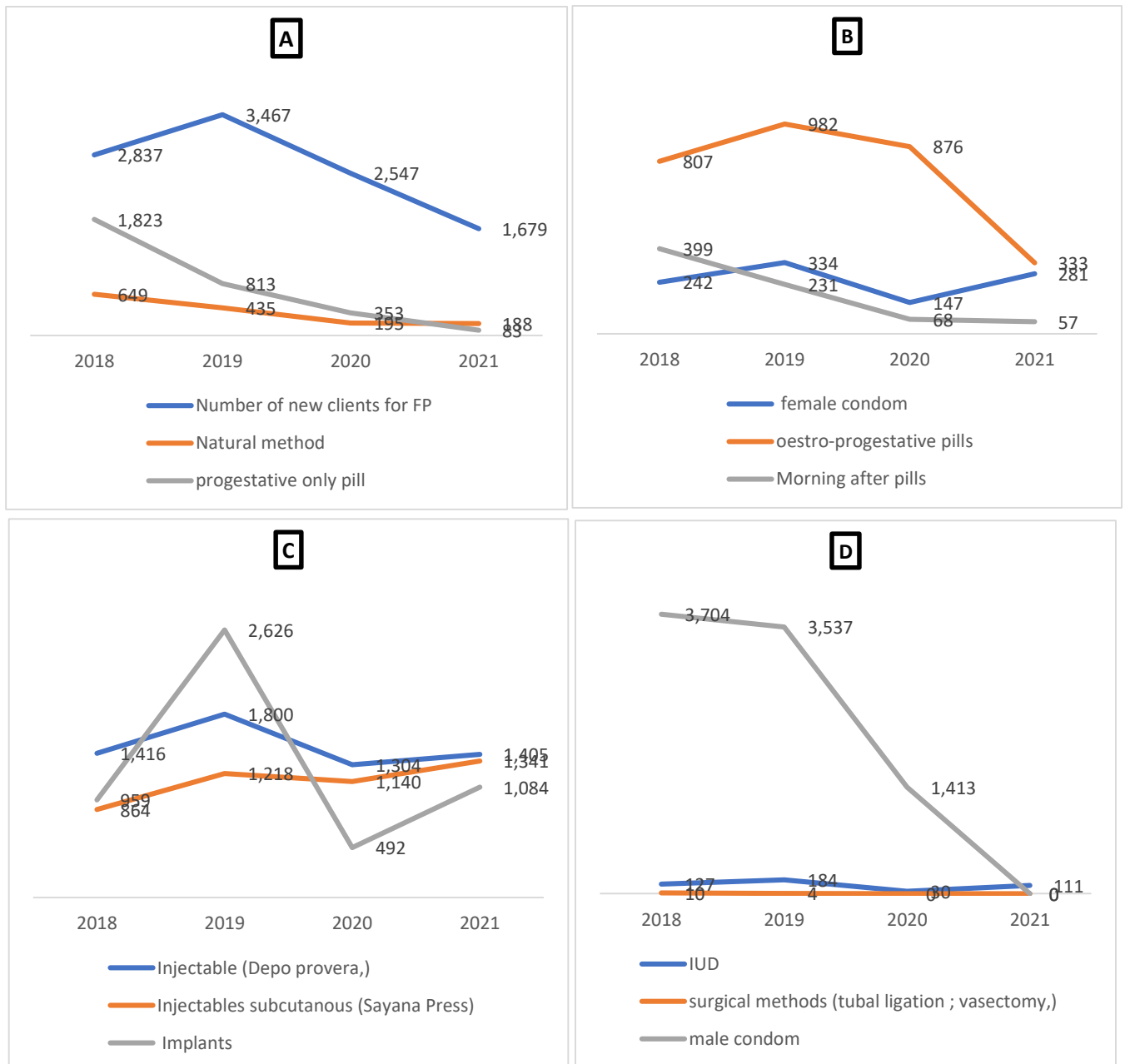
Injectable Depo-Provera (Figure 1C) has maintained its high clientele from 1,416 users in 2018, 1,800 users in 2019, 1,304 users in 2020, and 1,405 users in 2021. Injectable (Sayana Press) has witnessed a sharp increase in 2019 from 864 users in 2018 and since has maintained a steady increase through 2020 to 2021. This is relatively comfortable and accepted by users as it is a subcutaneous injection.

Implant users increased from 959 (in 2018) to 2626 and dropped in 2020 to 492 and an increase to 1,084 users in 2021. The implant is witnessing a timid use from 127 in 2018 to 184 in 2019, then drop to 30 in 2020 and a slight increase to 111 users in 2021. This could be because this method requires the services of a trained health care worker.

Vasectomy and tubal ligation witness 10 cases in 2018 and 4 in 2019 (Figure 1D) below. This was rejected by a lot of men and women; hence no case was recorded from 2020 to 2021. The male condom is highly used it maintains a steady use in 2018 across to 2021. This is one of the methods highly used and its preference to masculinity and easy used

and the fact that it prevents STDs and unwanted pregnancy. The contraceptive method that most used in BHD from 2018 to 2021 is the male condom.

Figure 1: Trends of contraceptive methods in BHD over a period of 4years (2018-2019). *Data source: Regional Delegation Southwest Region DHS, 2021.*



Summarily, the male condom was the most preferred with 8654 in four years, followed by Depo-Povera injectable 5,925, the implants with users 5,161 and the Sayana Press injectable with users 4,563. Progesterone only pills 3,072, COC with users 2,998, female condom 1,004 users and morning-after pills is the least with 755 users

The trends showed preferred methods of those women unmet need for services that intend to use contraception in the future. Injectables (22 %) and pills (20 %) were the preferred future methods for both spacers and limiters. Among the spacers, periodic abstinence (13 %) and condoms (11 %) were their most preferred methods for future use, while for limiters, female sterilization (9 %) and Norplant (8 %) were their next most common choices [1].

Prevalence of family planning uptake in BHD

Table1 presents the overall prevalence of family planning by health facility in the Buea Health District from 2018 to 2021. The overall prevalence of unmet needs of family planning was 24.3%. The prevalence was highest in the Bova health center (56.2%) and least in Buea Town (4.4%)

Table 1: Prevalence of family planning uptake by health area in Buea Health District

Health area/ Health facilities	15-49yrs	Using FP	Prevalence rate(PR)
Bokwango (regional Hospital)	3,596	478	13.3
Bova health center)	1,519	853	56.2
Buea road (7th Day Adventist Buea Road)	13,939	3,866	27.7
Buea town (Government integrated health center)	4,201	186	4.4
Molyko(Solidarity Health Foundation and Government integrated center Molyko)	5,662	2,604	46.0
Muea (Government integrated health center)	16,911	1,211	7.2
Tole (Government integrated health center)	2,938	450	15.3
Total	48,766	10,371	24.3

Data source: DHS, Regional Delegation of Health Southwest, and health facility records,2021.

DISCUSSION

Prevalence of contraceptive in the Buea health district

The prevalence of contraceptive use in BHD was 24.3 which is slightly higher than the prevalence of contraceptive use among women of reproductive age in sub-Saharan Africa which estimated at 17% [8]. There is a wide between-country variation in contraceptive use [8,9]. The study further reveals that the most widely used contraceptive method was the Injectable contraceptive be it Sayana press or Depo-Provera all of the last three months each [7]. The reasons associated to low uptake and the trends of family planning are Illiteracy and poverty which are independent drivers of lack of contraceptive use [8,9].

Trends and uptake of family planning

The overall contraceptive use in BHD was 24.3%. This result is similar to previous findings [6,7,8]. Related study showed that Six in ten (60%) women aged 18 to 49 years say it is very important to avoid becoming pregnant in the next month; one in four women (25%) say avoiding pregnancy is not a priority [1,5,13]. Some studies reported that one in seven (14%) sexually active women report they are not using any form of contraception and the leading reason was concern and dislike of side effects [8,10]. Many reasons have been given by women as including delayed coitus, takes time to insert and tiring, reduces sexual spontaneity, and reduces sexual pleasure [15].

Report from others studies state that more than four in ten (44%) women have been worried they were pregnant when they did not want to be, and the main reason was that they did not use birth control. Oral contraceptives and condoms are the leading forms of reversible contraception women use, and almost a quarter say they use an intrauterine device (IUD) [7,9]. These findings are contrary to those found at BHD where the leading contraception are injectables and implants [1]. Previous study reported that 72% of women use more than one type of contraception in their lifetime and on average, women use 3.4 different contraceptive methods throughout their lifetime [10]. The statistics of the morning-after pills and male condoms are challenging as this can be gotten from roadside hawkers, stores which are not found in the district report [5,10].

The contraceptive prevalence of male condoms showed a decrease in 2021, this could be attributed to the fact that the population does not get condoms from the hospitals on most occasions they get from shops around the quarters which are not considered in the report. This in line with others [1,12,13].

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of unmet needs of family planning was 24.3% in Buea Health District. Injectables and pills are the preferred future methods for both spacers and limiters. The number of new clients for family planning decreased from 2018 to 2021. The injectables (Sayana press or Depo-Provera) were the most used female contraceptives and male condom dominated in every year. The least used method were surgical methods (Vasectomy and Tubal ligation) and female condoms. Interventions studies based on health education on knowledge, attitude and practice could help improve family planning uptake in the Buea health district.

What the study adds

- Examine the trends of modern contraceptives in Buea Health District and how these trends influence the unmet needs of family planning and which methods are used by the population.
- Calculate the prevalence of modern family planning methods among women of reproductive age in Buea Health District will inform us about the unmet needs.

Recommendations:

Advocacy messages on long-term reversible contraceptive messages methods by health care providers will help to clear the air concerning the myth of contraceptives in Buea Health District.

Conflicting interest:

The author declares that there are no conflicting interests

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What is known about the topic?

- The uptake of the family is very low in the Buea Health District
- The prevalence of unmet need for modern contraceptives is 21.3% in Buea Health District.
- The population uses fewer effective methods of family planning.

What is not known about the topic

- Health care providers offer educational packages on family planning respecting the standard operating procedures.
- If effective counseling is done for clients to make informed choices
- Routine visits to the health facility facilities for follow up

List of Abbreviations

BHD	Buea Health District
CDHIS	Cameroon Demographic Health Information System
COC	Combine Oral Contraceptives
FP	Family Planning
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PR	Prevalence Rate
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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