



Short inter-pregnancy interval: choice or circumstance?

Taylor R¹, Yang J¹, Cheney K¹,
Black K^{1,2}

¹ Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, NSW (beckytaylor@gmail.com)

² The University of Sydney Central Clinical School, Faculty of Medicine and Health, Sydney, NSW



Introduction

Despite the knowledge of pregnancy risks attributable to inadequate birth spacing, over one third of pregnancies occur within 18 months of a preceding birth.^{1,2}

We interviewed women with a short inter-pregnancy interval (IPI) to explore their knowledge of contraception and birth-spacing and their experience of counselling on these themes.

Methods

We conducted in-depth interviews at a tertiary and a peripheral, urban maternity unit with women with a short IPI (live birth less than 18 months prior to conception of current pregnancy), who were fluent in English.

Women were recruited at the second antenatal visit or day three post-partum. Interviews were recorded and women received a \$25 participation voucher.

Results

We interviewed eleven women. IPI ranged from 2.5-15 months. Only 18% had planned their current pregnancy.

Women did not feel informed about ideal birth-spacing, but nearly all suggested that an IPI greater than 18 months was preferable.

Women reported they felt informed about contraception and that it was accessible to them, however knowledge of different contraceptive methods was in-fact poor and there had been little uptake post-partum.

Knowledge about the efficacy of lactational amenorrhoea and contraceptive methods compatible with breastfeeding was poor.

Women reported that contraception and IPI was rarely discussed in the hospital or by the GP postnatally.

Conclusion

Women with a short IPI feel contraception is accessible to them, however the majority appear not to access it.

Medical professionals need to do more to educate women in the antenatal and postnatal period to help them space their pregnancies appropriately.

References

1)Kozuki N, Lee A, et al. Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group Small-for-Gestational-Age-Preterm Birth Working (2013). The associations of birth intervals with small-for-gestational-age, preterm, and neonatal and infant mortality: a meta-analysis. *BMC Public Health* 13 Suppl 3: S3.

2) Gemmill A, Lindberg L et al. Short interpregnancy intervals in the United States. *Obstet Gynecol* (2013) 122: 64-71.