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Knowledge and acceptabilty of the menstrual cup among medical practitioners working in obstetrics and gynaecology department

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ABSTRACT

Background

Menstrual cups are funnel-shaped receptacles that collect menstrual fluid. There is clear evidence for the benefit of the menstrual cup usage among girls and women, especially in resource poor settings. The device has modest cost-savings, improves menstrual hygiene management and aids in contribution to the advancement of women who were previously disadvantaged by lack of sanitary products. The menstrual cup has been around for centuries but still remains unfamiliar to many. There are misconceptions amongst the general public regarding menstruation as well as its management. Many of the misconceptions are closely linked to the social background as well as the upbringing and cultural factors. Those misconceptions are also seen in health care workers. Medical practitioners are trusted throughout the communities to be advocates for the health of all. Advocating for something is linked to the knowledge that one would have on the subject, in order to be able to promote it adequately.

Objective: To assess the knowledge of the menstrual cup among medical practitioners in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. To assess if the medical practitioners would recommend the usage of the menstrual cup to their patients. To assess the factors that may deter them from recommending its usage.

Study methods: A cross-sectional study using a self-administered questionnaire given to medical practitioners in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, the University of the Witwatersrand. Analysis of data was performed using SPSS® Statistics version 23.0, Armonk, New York, 2015.

Results: There were 58% of participants who had knowledge of the menstrual cup. There was no association found between knowledge of menstrual cup and the participants race, age, gender, academic level or work experience. Only 12 % of practitioners reported that they would recommend the cup for usage to their patients. Reasons for lack of recommendation included lack of knowledge and lack of experience with the menstrual cup. The most common complication of the cup was thought to be infections.

Conclusion: To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to assess knowledge of the menstrual cup among medical practitioners in South Africa. It has highlighted the need for menstrual hygiene management teaching among medical practitioners. An in-depth knowledge may assist medical practitioners in discussing alternative menstrual hygiene management with their patients.