

# Assessment of Knowledge and Awareness of Hormonal Contraceptives Side Effects among Female Students at Copperbelt University

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## Commentary

In developing countries such as Zambia, Contraceptives methods are a priority form of solution to the family planning problems such as unintended pregnancies. However, the hormonal contraceptives are associated with a variety of risks; among them are cardiovascular conditions such as myocardial infarction, hypertension, pulmonary embolism and strokes. Hence, there is need to raise awareness and knowledge on the risks or side effects accompanying the use of contraceptives. To assess knowledge and awareness on hormonal contraceptives side effects among female students at the Copper belt University.

The study was conducted among 313 female students at the Copper belt University Riverside campus in Kitwe. Individual structured questionnaires which have been pre-tested in other studies were used for data collection among participants. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used for data management during data entry and analysis. Results: Most of the respondents fell in the 21-30 years age (n=303, 96.8%). We found that the majority of the respondents chose weight gain as the main side effect (n=127, 40.6%). Followed by affecting regularity of menstrual cycle (n=118, 37.7%), fertility (n=54, 17.3%) and causing nausea or vomiting (n=6, 2.2%). To assess knowledge, 8 questions were answered with total score of 8. The questions ranged from basic

information regarding contraceptive methods to sources of information. Then each question was scored one point for a correct response and zero for incorrect response. An overall knowledge score was calculated by adding up the scores for each respondent across all questions. There were (n=63, 20.1%) of respondents with poor knowledge, (n=163, 52.1%) of them had fair knowledge, while (n=87, 27.1%) had good knowledge on contraceptive methods. There were (n=137, 43.6%) of respondents who were not aware regarding side effects of contraceptive methods, (n=92, 29.3%) of them they were slightly aware, (n=55, 17.5%) were very aware, while (n=30, 9.6) were absolutely not sure of the side effects posed by the hormonal contraceptives methods.

Female undergraduate students at the Copper belt University have fair knowledge and are not aware of the profound medical side effects of contraceptive methods. The practice of contraception and emergency contraception is fair, about 59%. The rate of contraceptive use among participants in the present study was high. About half of the respondents were sexually active and started sexual activity between 21 and 30 years of age.

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