

Original research article

Young men's awareness and knowledge of intrauterine devices in the United States

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Abstract

Objective: Increasing use of long-acting methods of contraception, such as intrauterine devices (IUDs), has been recognized as a promising strategy to reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancy. While men may play an important role in promoting or discouraging contraceptive use, very little research has examined men's knowledge of and attitudes toward IUDs.

Study design: We used data from the 903 men included in the 2009 National Survey of Reproductive and Contraceptive Knowledge to examine their awareness and knowledge of IUDs and other contraceptive methods by several individual-level characteristics.

Results: Men's awareness and perceived knowledge of IUDs is low in comparison to condoms and birth control pills. Men's perceived knowledge of IUDs was lower than their objective knowledge, as measured by true/false questions about IUDs, suggesting that men may be more knowledgeable of IUDs than they perceive. In the multivariate models, men who were uninsured [adjusted odds ratio (AOR), 0.4; 95% confidence interval (CI), 0.2–0.6], identified as Christian (AOR, 0.6; 95% CI, 0.3–1.0) and who had never had a sexual health visit (AOR, 0.6; 95% CI, 0.4–1.0) were less likely to have heard of IUDs. Among men who had heard of the method, Hispanic men were less likely (AOR, 0.2; 95% CI, 0.1–0.5) to be more knowledgeable of the method.

Conclusion: Young men report low awareness of IUDs in comparison to other methods, and this varies by demographic characteristics including health insurance status. Family planning programs should consider targeted knowledge promotion for young men, with a focus on contraceptive methods besides condoms and oral contraception.

Implications: Male partners are influential in contraceptive use, yet little research has examined their IUD knowledge. Our findings indicate that healthcare providers may play important role in increasing young men's knowledge of contraceptive methods, including IUDs. This study highlights the need to better incorporate young men into contraception research and programs.

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1. Introduction

Increasing use of long-acting methods of contraception, such as intrauterine devices (IUDs), has been recognized as a promising strategy to reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancy [1,2]. Despite the many positive attributes of the IUD, use remains low in the US, though levels of use are increasing. In 2006–2008, 5.5% of women using contraception in the US were currently using an IUD, compared to 2.0% in 2002 [3]. While efforts are currently underway to train healthcare providers with the appropriate knowledge

and skills to enable IUD use and the Affordable Care Act legislation should make IUDs available without cost sharing, less attention has focused on the critical role of individual- and couple-level factors [4,5].

Research has shown that male partners have an important influence on contraceptive use in heterosexual relationships [6–13]. This small body of research indicates that men are indeed involved and interested in being involved in contraceptive decision making [8,10,11]. Furthermore, lack of access to accurate information about contraception among men may inhibit communication within couples and promote the use of male-centered methods, such as withdrawal and condoms [10,12,13]. While men may play an important role in promoting or discouraging contraceptive use, very little research has examined men's knowledge of and attitudes

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Table 1
Male respondent characteristics, NSRCK (*n*=903).

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	Weighted percentages (%)
Age in years (mean, standard error)	22.7	0.2
Race/ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic white	482	60.6
Non-Hispanic black	134	11.8
Hispanic	214	19.8
Asian/other	73	7.8
Insurance status in the past year		
Medicaid only	43	5.5
Medicaid and private	71	7.7
Private insurance	510	53.9
Other insurance	23	1.6
Uninsured	256	31.2
Educational attainment		
Less than high school	132	17.2
High school graduate/general education development (GED)	288	31.7
Associates degree or some college	364	35.3
Bachelors or graduate degree	117	15.8
Nativity		
United States	774	85.5
Somewhere else	127	14.5
Language spoken at home		
English	734	81.7
Spanish	118	11.5
Other	48	6.8
Public assistance in the past year	48	7.0
Religion		
Catholic	206	19.9
Christian	214	21.3
Protestant	163	19.5
Jewish or other	55	8.2
None	237	29.1
Sexual experience and relationship status		
Current sexual relationship	420	51.7
Sexually experienced but no current sexual relationship	321	35.5
Never sexually active	162	12.8
Had sex education class	706	79.1
Ever visited a doctor for sexual health services	301	40.2
Previous pregnancy	152	21.8

toward IUDs. Research has shown low levels of IUD knowledge among men, which may inhibit men's participation in decision making [8–10,12,14,15]. One recent study

that specifically examined knowledge and use of IUDs found that men were far more likely to have low IUD knowledge than women [16].

Research and interventions focused on IUDs have nearly exclusively focused on women [17–22]. A better understanding of men's knowledge of and attitudes toward IUDs is needed to aid in the development of new programmatic approaches that recognize the importance of intimate partners and relationships in contraceptive use, satisfaction and continuation. The present analysis builds on prior research with the National Survey of Reproductive and Contraceptive Knowledge (NSRCK) that examined men's knowledge of and attitudes toward a range of contraceptive methods [14–16]. This analysis differs from previous studies by comparing perceived versus objective knowledge of IUDs and other contraceptive methods and by examining a broad set of sociodemographic characteristics as correlates of IUD knowledge. The objective of this analysis is threefold: (1) to describe young men's IUD knowledge, (2) to compare the levels of men's knowledge about IUDs to knowledge of other contraceptive methods and (3) to examine the relationship between individual-level characteristics and IUD knowledge and awareness.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Data

We analyzed data from the 2009 NSRCK, which was commissioned by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and conducted by the Guttmacher Institute. This survey, also known as the Fog Zone survey, assessed the attitudes and behavior of unmarried young adults regarding pregnancy, contraception and related issues. The NSRCK collected information from 1800 unmarried 18- to 29-year-old women and men in the United States. Sampling was conducted so that weighted results are nationally representative in terms of gender, age and race and ethnicity. Details of the NSRCK sampling methodology can be found elsewhere [23]. We analyzed data from the 903 men included in the sample. Because the data were publicly available and deidentified, the Committee on the Protection

Table 2
Young men's perceived and objective knowledge of various contraceptive methods.

	Perceived knowledge (<i>n</i> =903)			Objective knowledge (among those who had heard of method) ^a	
	Never heard of method (%)	Heard, know nothing or little (%)	Heard, know a lot or everything (%)	Less knowledgeable (%)	More knowledgeable (%)
IUD	35.5	62.4	2.1	37.8	62.2
Pill	5.6	78.3	15.9	62.7	37.3
Injectable	31.3	66.0	2.7	52.6	47.4
Condom	0.9	28.7	70.4	37.5	62.5

^a Sample size is different for each method since a different number of men had heard of each method. IUD, *n*=568; pill, *n*=862; injectable, *n*=598; condom, *n*=893.

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