



MENSTRUAL CUPS: A SAFER, ECO FRIENDLY MENSTRUAL HYGIENIC PRODUCT

Mrs. Shine Jose¹, Dr. Rajwant Kaur Randhawa², Dr. Priyanka Chudhary³

Desh Bhagat University

Abstract:

Introduction: A cross sectional survey conducted to study the knowledge, attitude and practices of menstrual cups and its recommended usage from health care providers dealing with young girls and women.

Methods: A questionnaire was used which consisted 20 questions regarding the advocacy of menstrual cups, health and hygiene, cervical cancer/vaccine during campaigns/consultation, feedback from young girls using menstrual cups, usage of digital platform to seek information on menstrual cups and also assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of the health care provider .

Results: A total of 163 obstetricians and gynecologists in the public and private practice in Bangalore gave the responses. 93% of the health care providers thought that menstrual cups are more environment friendly than sanitary pads. Only 57% of health care providers actually advised young girls on the usage of menstrual cups. Though 50% of health care providers thought that it is appropriate to advice about menstrual cups to young girls, still only 35% only advocated the use of menstrual cups to young girls.

Conclusion: Awareness among the healthcare providers on advocacy of eco-friendly measure to promote menstrual health and hygiene should be improved. .

Keywords: Menstrual cup, Hygiene, cervical cancer, vaccine, survey, health providers, young girls, women.

Introduction:

Every year 28th May is celebrated as the world menstrual hygiene day all over the globe, emphasizing the aim to make awareness to the females regarding the importance of menstruation and menstrual hygiene. This date is so selected which reminds us the process of menstruation, that is 5 days in 28 days of a cycle. According to the report of UNICEF IN 2018, poor menstrual hygiene can leads for the physical health risks and these may lead to the major

problems of reproductive and urinary tract infections. It also reveals that many adolescent girls and women are not able to afford the menstrual hygiene products too.

Menstrual hygiene is a major concern to be looked up in the developing country, due to lack of knowledge and cost barriers, females in these countries manage the menstruation with unhygienic and uncomfortable products. Still the lack of adequate knowledge due to stigma regarding the process of menstruation is one among the main reason which is leading to use the unhygienic products for menstrual hygiene in the rural areas of our country. Although our country had dramatic development in almost all the fields, our major population of adolescents have not even heard about the menstrual cups which was invented in the 19th century.

Definition:

Menstrual cup is a flexible cup made of medical grade silicone, rubber or latex which is worn in vagina and collects blood during menstruation process. These cups collect the blood flow rather than absorbing which is done by the widely used sanitary pads and tampons. These cups can be kept in vagina to a maximum of 12 hours without the risk of getting started with any infections, hence they are much safer than the sanitary pads.

Historical view:

It was in the year 1932 the first menstrual cup was patented by Mc Glasson and Perkins. It was a bullet shaped menstrual cup, but didn't get its popularity due to so many reasons. Later the first commercial menstrual cup was patented by Leona Chalmers in 1937.

In 1960's it was the Tassaway brand of menstrual cups that was introduced. These cups were made of rubber, still they also were not a success in the market.

The first commercially accepted menstrual cups were introduced in the market by United Nations in 1980's. They were made of latex rubber material and were popularized and are still available.

The present day menstrual cups which were made of silicone were first manufactured in United Kingdom in 2001 and were branded as the Moon cup.

Currently menstrual cups are all manufactured from medical grade silicone as they are much durable and less of risk of infections and allergies.

Types:

- Disposable menstrual cups which are made of medical grade polymer and are placed at the base of cervix and hence cover the cervix as of the diaphragm. They are also known as menstrual disc with an outer ring and a collapsible center. This type can even be worn during sexual intercourse.

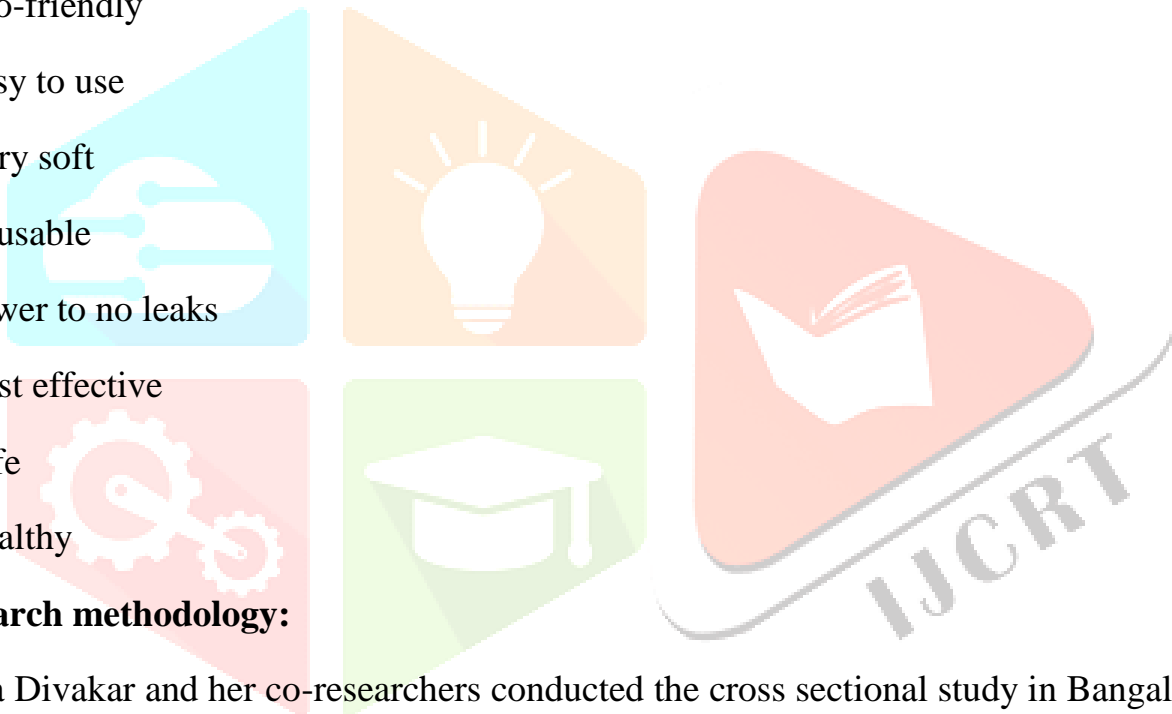
- Reusable menstrual cups are made of silicone and as it is named it can be reused after each menstruation. These type can be used for a long of 7-10 years.

Sizes of menstrual cups:

There are two common sizes of menstrual cup available in market they are small size and large size. One has to choose the appropriate size to get the required benefit of the menstrual cups. Small size cup will be fitting to those females who are below the age of 30 years and also has not given birth vaginally. Large cup often is suitable for those females above 30 years and has given birth through vaginally. The selection also depends on the age as well as the flow of menstruation too.

Benefits of using a menstrual cup:

- Eco-friendly
- Easy to use
- Very soft
- Reusable
- Fewer to no leaks
- Cost effective
- Safe
- Healthy



Research methodology:

Hema Divakar and her co-researchers conducted the cross sectional study in Bangalore among the public and private obstetricians and gynecologists regarding the knowledge attitude and practices on menstrual cups. 163 responses were analyzed through a survey method of data collection. The data from those health care providers who conducted health and hygienic programs in schools revealed that 20% of girls requested the use of tampons whereas only 7% asked on menstrual cups. Only 17% of health workers talked about menstrual cup in their consultation room. 93% thought that the menstrual cups are more environment friendly than sanitary pads. 51% of health worker thought that menstrual cups are appropriate to advice to young girls still only 35% are implementing this.

Conclusion of study:

Awareness among the healthcare providers to provide adequate knowledge regarding a safe and eco-friendly hygienic product will help to promote menstrual health and hygiene among the young girls and women.

How do we insert the menstrual cup?

The administration of menstrual cup is not so difficult. The following steps make it easy for the use.

- Select appropriate menstrual cup
- Wash hands, the menstrual cup should be cleaned in boiled water before inserting.
- Being relaxed in a distraction-free environment is important and will give you the privacy required to insert at your own pace. If you are not relaxed, the vaginal muscles will tighten and make it uncomfortable, if not impossible, for insertion.
- Select a comfortable position either in a squatting position or putting a leg raised on the toilet seat.
- Before inserting the apply water or water based lube on the rim so that the insertion will be easy. Insert the cup by folding it and hold the cup by stem facing down. The folding can be of either 'c' fold or triangular fold or may be rolled form.
- Once the cup is in vagina rotate it, so that it open inside so that a airtight seal is formed and thus helps to collect the blood.

How to take out the cup:

- Wash your hands
- Place your index finger and thumb in the vagina. Hold on the stem of the cup and gently pull so that we reach the base of the cup.
- Gently pinch the base to release the seal and slowly pull down the cup.
- Once the cup is out, the blood can be emptied in to toilet or sin and the cup can be cleaned with water and can be reinserted.

India scenario on menstrual cup:-

Menstrual cups reached India only a few years back, but still as these cups has to be inserted into the vagina, young girls and women are unsure of using it. Also there is no large company manufacturing these products in India, also the companies making sanitary pads are much bigger and they have a good influence in the media also.

An another emphasis of the Indian culture on the women's virginity and the myth that using a cup would make the young girls to loose the virginity also is a reason for the non-popularity of these menstrual cups in this developing country. When there is lack of knowledge of the use

and benefits of these cups there will not be much access to this product by the females. Lastly it is the person's choice, what to use during the menstruation

References:

1. Hema Divakar, Rita singh, poorni Narayanan, et.al. Menstrual health and Hygiene- study of knowledge attitude practices of obgyns on usage of menstrual cups, volume 7, issue 8, Evidence Based Med. Health, volume 7, issue 8, feb.24,2020
2. Van Ejik AM, Sivakami M, Thakkar MB, et al. Menstrual Hygiene management among adolescent girls in India: a systemic review and meta-analysis. BMJ open 2016 ;6(3):e010290.
3. Infant Henzia T, Menstrual cup: an environmental friendly choice, Nightingale nursing Times, volume XIV, NO;5/August 2018.
4. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/Dehradun/62-youngwomen-in-country-using-cloth-for-menstrual-protection-says-report/articleshow/62608932.cms>. Accessed on Nov 7, 2019.
5. Aiswarya N, Simran Tharani, can menstrual cups become alternative to sanitary napkins? A critical analysis, Indian Journal of Public Health Research & development, vol:10, no:11, November 2019

