Abstract

Community study of reproductive tract infection among females of reproductive age group living in subdivided-flats in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Introduction:

Sexually transmitted infection (STIs) was 1.2% for men and 2.5% for women in Hong Kong. Sexual health is recognised as a major part of reproductive health. Many are aware of the prevention of STI by safe sex behaviour. However, the infection of the reproductive system, or reproductive tract infections (RTIs) could indicate endogenous infections (overgrowth of organisms), iatrogenic infection (microorganism being introduced into the reproductive system) and STIs. In other words, STIs are just a way of infection. Other factors such as menstrual health, genital hygiene will also determine reproductive health. Currently, there is no previous study about reproductive tract infections in Hong Kong that could affect reproductive health. Previous studies have shown that the environment could be one of the factors negatively affecting menstrual hygiene among females. According to the Population Census released by HKSAR Census and Statistics Department (2021), the population of females increased from 51.9% in 2016 to 53.2% in 2021. Unsatisfactory menstrual hygiene are prone to RTIs. Females residing in sub-divided flats could be prone to impaired reproductive health. This study would focus on reproductive tract infections of females in reproductive ages living in subdivided-flat in Hong Kong.

Methods:
Females living in sub-divided flats in Hong Kong were recruited in a community-based screening programme in our study through convenient sampling with non-profit organizations. Informed consent of participants were collected. Demographic information of the participants (age, sex, education level) were collected through face-to-face interviews. This methodology was approved by the Joint Chinese University of Hong Kong - New Territories East Cluster Clinical Research Ethics Committee of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (2021.313) and was conducted complied with the Declaration of Helsinki.

**Results:** During November and December 2021, 218 adult females living in sub-divided flats were recruited and underwent questionnaires about RTIs in a community project in Kwai Tsing and Kowloon City district. For menstrual health management practice, 71 participants (96%) reported adequate clean menstrual management material. Only 2 people (0.9%) reported they have their material changed every 8 hours, 99.1% of the participants change within 8 hours interval. For RTIs, 74 participants (37% of all of our female participants reported that they have signs and symptoms in the perineal area within one year. Only 15 participants (20% of the participants) with reported perineal signs and symptoms sought medical advice within the year. 3 people (20%) and 6 people (40%) were diagnosed with candidiasis and vaginitis respectively.

**Discussion:** As previously there is no RTIs study done in Hong Kong, and also, RTIs among population based study. This study could be a beginning for other larger scale studies. This study also provides insight on the health education on RTIs because only a small proportion of participants sought help when they encountered perineal symptoms. Additional health promotions activities on reproductive health especially on when to seek medical help could be further held in the community. Research on the taboos or embarrassment about reproductive health could be further explored to have a better understanding about reproductive health belief about the population.