Pregnancy Tests:
A Best Kept Secret to Expand Access to Family Planning?

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New and Underused RH Technologies Caucus Meeting
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Denial of FP Methods to Non-Menstruating Women: A Substantial Medical Barrier

Menstruation requirement remains a common barrier to contraceptive service delivery


Few non-menstruating clients are actually pregnant

“When you get there for the first time, they ask if you are having your period. When it is no, they give you another appointment. But when it is yes, they give you cotton wool and you go somewhere discreet to put some blood and come back to show it to the provider. It is only then that the provider shows you the methods.”

(49 year-old injectable user)
PRUDENCE

“She can start _____ immediately if it is reasonably certain that she is not pregnant.”

WHO “Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive Use,” 2nd Ed. 2004
“The Prudence Continuum”

CARELESSNESS  PRUDENCE  MEDICAL BARRIERS
Partial Solution: The Pregnancy Checklist

Research demonstrates that the checklist is effective at ruling out pregnancy

Included in the Global Handbook for Family Planning and in the WHO Decision-Making tool

Instances when the checklist cannot exclude pregnancy

Some providers don’t like/trust the checklist
What about Pregnancy Tests?

Clearblue easy
Pregnancy Test
DIGITAL

RESULTS 5 DAYS SOONER**

2 TESTS
99% accurate at detecting typical pregnancy hormone levels. Note that hormone levels vary. See insert.

no test is more accurate
over 99% accurate* from the day of your expected period

Pregnant
Non Pregnant

= $ 23
What about Pregnancy Tests?

≈ $2.00

Source: http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?file=1.0.htm&module=DMMP&language=English
What about Pregnancy Tests?

$0.09

Source: AccessRH Catalog
Two-Country Study: Ghana and Zambia

Hypothesis Tested:
Free access to pregnancy tests will reduce the proportion of clients who are denied an effective method.
Simple Design

Cluster Randomized-Controlled, Pre-Post Observations

10 family planning clinics

5 family planning clinics  5 family planning clinics

Free Pregnancy tests  Control
Data Collection

Family planning providers in all clinics documented information about each client:

- Method requested
- Method received
- Menstrual status
- Reason for not receiving desired method (if not received)
Results
Results: Zambia

% New, Non-Menstruating Clients Denied Effective Method

- Free Pregnancy Tests: 15 (N=211)
- Control: 17 (N=166)
Results: Zambia

% New, Non-Menstruating Clients Denied Effective Method

N=211  N=166  N=226

Free Pregnancy Tests  Control

15  17  17

Pre-test  Post-test

N=211  N=166  N=226
Results: Zambia

% New, Non-Menstruating Clients Denied Effective Method

- Free Pregnancy Tests:
  - Pre-test: 15
  - Post-test: 4
  - N=211

- Control:
  - Pre-test: 17
  - Post-test: 17
  - N=166

N=402
N=226
Results: Ghana

% New, Non-Menstruating Clients Denied Effective Method

Free Pregnancy Tests: N=211
Control: N=166

Pre-test:
- Free Pregnancy Tests: 6
- Control: 14
Results: Ghana

% New, Non-Menstruating Clients Denied Effective Method

- Free Pregnancy Tests:
  - Pre-test: 6% (N=211)
  - Post-test: 8% (N=402)

- Control:
  - Pre-test: 14% (N=166)
  - Post-test: 6% (N=226)
Cost per “Additional New Client”

Total cost of tests used = $9.81

# New clients not turned away = 17

= $0.57
Study Conclusions

Pregnancy tests are much less expensive than is widely assumed.
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Where service denial to non-menstruating clients is a problem (e.g., Zambia), free pregnancy testing in FP clinics may increase FP uptake.
Study Conclusions

- Pregnancy tests are much less expensive than is widely assumed.
- Where service denial to non-menstruating clients is a problem (e.g., Zambia), free pregnancy testing in FP clinics may increase FP uptake.
- Cost per additional client served is modest.
Pregnancy tests are much less expensive than is widely assumed.

Where service denial to non-menstruating clients is a problem (e.g., Zambia), free pregnancy testing in FP clinics may increase FP uptake.

Cost per additional client served is modest.

FP programs should consider making pregnancy tests available at no cost to clients.
Other Potential Benefits of Pregnancy Testing

- FP demand generation
- Social marketing including by CHWs
- Tool for improving continuation of progestin-only methods
- Contribute to decrease in gestational age for clients seeking ANC and abortion services

Overview: Benefits and Limitations of Pregnancy Test and Pregnancy Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pregnancy Test</th>
<th>Pregnancy Checklist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pros:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pros:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Easy to use; minimal training</td>
<td>• Cheapest option</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Effective, but not before at least 1 week after missed menstrual period</td>
<td>• Effective at identifying women who are not pregnant before pregnancy test can be used</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Does not depend on client responses or recall</td>
<td>• No commodity procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low cost</td>
<td><strong>Cons:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cons:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cons:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not effective at identifying early pregnancies (before menstrual period is missed)</td>
<td>• Requires some initial training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does not work for all women</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Not acceptable to some providers</td>
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</table>
• Providers should be equipped with and trained in use of both pregnancy checklist and pregnancy tests
  • Use checklist first. If pregnancy cannot be ruled out, follow up with pregnancy test.
  • Exception 1: If menses are late, skip checklist & confirm pregnancy with pregnancy test.
  • Exception 2: Do not use a pregnancy test between two normal menses.
Discussion

- What are the opportunities to increase availability of free pregnancy tests for clients?

- What are the challenges associated with scaling up pregnancy tests?
  - If stock-outs were to occur, would we be undermining positive work with pregnancy checklist?

- What role could the Coalition play in helping expand access to this “underused” technology?
Thank You!