



Menstruation Awareness

Alert: Code Red

Riya Ramteke, Sumanshu Borkar, Ruchika Kamble

Dr. Ambedkar Institution of Management studies and research, Nagpur, 440010.

ABSTRACT

Mensuration is extensive yet an unvalued topic associated with myths and impurity. It is compelling and interdicted due to lack of awareness. The deficiency of consciousness regarding menstruation and related issue is not only due to lack of access but also due to paucity of acceptance regarding menses. The improvised female and those living in rural area are under the impression of periods not being a regular biological function. The dearth of ingress to pharmacies and must needed menstrual products mostly push them to resort to unhygienic alternatives. Conservative norms and beliefs surrounding the issue add up to the concept of menstruation becoming a proscription; as a result, some women withhold themselves from using menstrual products at all and in not only rural but also in few urban societies menstruation is degraded and with this comes the discrimination most females have to face.

Taboos regarding menses present in many societies impact on girls' and women's emotional state, mentality and lifestyle and most importantly, health. This study aimed to examine the menstrual awareness and its barriers in rural and illiterate communities. There is the need to follow a strategic approach in impeding these issues. This paper aims to discuss menstruation ignorance, physical as well as mental impact women in general have to face, myths prevalent in India, government initiatives aiming for the wellbeing of the community and relevance of addressing these issues in primary care and a brief description as to the resolution of this issue.

INTRODUCTION

What is Menstruation? Menstruation, or period, is normal vaginal bleeding that occurs as part of a woman's monthly cycle. Every month, your body prepares for pregnancy. If no pregnancy occurs, the uterus, or womb, sheds its lining. The menstrual blood is partly blood and partly tissue from inside the uterus. It passes out of the body through the vagina. Although everyone is familiar with this term we think that there is still not enough awareness regarding this topic especially in rural areas. The prime objective of the study is to shed light on the conditions of women in rural part of the country and the difficulties they have to face.

DISCUSSION

Why is Menstruation Awareness important?

The negligence of menstruation and related terminologies including myths and taboos is due to lack of awareness. Many girls around the age group of 10-18 years in India drop out of school because they don't have access to menstrual hygiene facilities. Poor financial conditions, lack of resources, and considering menstruating girls as filthy contributed majorly to this situation.

The ignorance of menstrual issues has deprived many girls from accessing their fundamental Right to Education. This contributes to the increment of illiteracy, discrimination and mythos regarding menstruation, etc. Females in rural and backward areas of the country face most of the problems related to menstrual health and access to resources. Thus there is the need to outspread awareness regarding menses.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY:

Menstrual hygiene day is celebrated on 28th May. The main objective of this day is to break taboos surrounding menstruation, raise awareness of the importance of good menstrual hygiene management worldwide highlight solutions that addresses these challenges.

Menstrual hygiene day is a global platform that brings together the non-government organisations, government agencies, media, private sectors and individuals to promote menstrual hygiene management.

VISION:

To create a world where females can manage their menstruation hygiene.

MISSION:

Mensuration hygiene day aims to break the silence and taboo, raise awareness and change negative social norms surrounding menstrual hygiene management around the world.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE:

Indian government took certain initiatives to raise awareness about menstrual hygiene and related terms such as sanitation and health hazardous that may occur due to lack of knowledge. Government is providing appropriate aid to the needful.

Some key initiatives of government are:

- : SABLA program
- : The National Rural Livelihood Mission
- : Swachh Vidyalaya
- : menstrual hygiene scheme
- : Kishori Shakti Yojana
- : Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha

Government Efforts to Ensure Menstrual Hygiene Focus on Sanitary Napkins.

India is a country where only 58 % of menstruating women have been exposed to safe and hygienic methods of menstrual protection. The remaining face risks of severe health vulnerabilities arising out of the use of homegrown alternatives such as hay, dried leaves and old rugs. This discrepancy in the choice of menstrual products varies according to factors including area of residence, lifestyle, income group, etc.

The government launched the National Menstrual Hygiene Scheme under the 'Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram' program in 2014. The objective of the scheme was to promote menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in rural areas by supplying as well as training self-help groups to make sanitary napkins. These sanitary napkins are sold under the brand 'Freedays' at a subsidised rate of Rs 6 for a packet of six napkins. An Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) is appointed to sell these.

The major objectives of the scheme were:

- To increase awareness among adolescent girls on Menstrual Hygiene.
- To increase access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins to adolescent girls in rural areas.
- To ensure safe disposal of Sanitary Napkins in an environmentally friendly manner.
- From 2014 onwards, funds are now being provided to States/UTs under National Health Mission for decentralized procurement of sanitary napkins packs for provision to rural adolescent girls at a subsidized rate of Rs 6 for a pack of 6 napkins. The ASHA will continue to be responsible for distribution, receiving an incentive @ Rs 1 per pack sold and a free pack of napkins every month for her own personal use.
- She (ASHA) will convene monthly meetings at the Aanganwadi Centres or other such platforms for adolescent girls to focus on issue of menstrual hygiene and also serve as a platform to discuss other relevant SRH issues.

What Role Do Anganwadi and Asha Workers Play?

AsANW (Anganwadi workers), ANM (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife), and ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) are community grassroots workers and mostly women. ANWs run a child care centre called "Anganwadi" as a part of Integrated Child Development Services. A centre has to ensure non-formal pre-education to children (age 0-5), Supplementary Nutrition, Health Check-up and referral services. An Anganwadi centre comes under Women and Child Development.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development provides training to the Anganwadi centres around Menstrual health. In addition, the centre has to provide women and adolescents with sanitary pads. Whereas, ASHA, the first contact person, is entrusted with the responsibility of providing adequate knowledge around menstrual hygiene. In addition, ASHA is also a part of Village Health and Sanitation Committee (VHSC) and works along with panchayats. They are entrusted with the responsibility of disseminating information about Menstrual Health to the women through the Self-Help Groups. A range of materials have been developed around MHS yet the scope of intervention is limited.

MENTRUAL PRODUCTS:

There is a plethora of period products available these days. There is a huge range of more eco-friendly menstrual products out there. This is especially true nowadays given that the landscape of period products has changed dramatically in recent years, and concerns around sustainability are (rightfully) ever-increasing. Allow us to show you some of the main options available.

SANITARY PADS:

Probably the most commonly used period product, the sanitary pad/napkin has been around commercially for over a century. They are attached to the inside of the user's underwear, and work by absorbing menstrual blood through layers of absorbent material – usually rayon, cotton and plastic. Over the decades the design of pads has evolved to become much more absorbent and comfortable, with a wide range available to suit different flows.

However, due to their disposable nature they're not the most environmentally-friendly option, as they must be changed roughly every four hours to prevent bacteria growth and odour. This can also mean the lifetime cost of a pack or two of pads every month really adds up. The good news is that there are now washable sanitary pads available in many countries. These can be reused multiple times, which is both more environmentally-friendly and cost-effective.

TAMPONS:

In terms of popular use, the tampon is a close second to the sanitary pad. Similar in terms of the materials it is made of, they differ in that a tampon is used internally by insertion into the vaginal canal. This can take practice, and not everyone finds them comfortable to use.

Tampons work by absorbing menstrual blood internally, and can be left in for about four hours, at which point they are removed by pulling gently on the string.

Many users like tampons because they are more discreet than pads, both in terms of the smaller packaging and while they are being used (i.e. they are not visible on the underwear). Plus, they can generally feel more comfortable when compared to sitting on a pad, which if left on too long can get messy.

MENSTUAL CUP:

In recent years, many people have given up the more traditional options of tampons and pads in favor of the menstrual cup. This small silicone or latex cup works by being folded and inserted internally so that it rests on the vaginal wall, where it collects blood. It takes a bit of practice to get the positioning right, but once the technique is mastered then leakages shouldn't be a problem, and they are normally very comfortable.

The cups can stay in for up to 12 hours, at which point they should be removed, emptied, rinsed, and re-used as necessary. At the end of the menstrual cycle, they should be sterilized in hot water before using for the next period. They can be used for up to a decade (that's right, a decade), making them one of the most eco and wallet-friendly options. It should be noted that as with tampons, there is a small risk of TSS with menstrual cups.

MENSTRUAL DISC:

The lesserknown menstrual disc, made of plastic or silicone, is also inserted into the vagina, and rests on the base of the cervix. Like the menstrual cup, it can stay in for up to 12 hours, and works by collecting blood in the disc – and again, similar to the cup, it can also take some time to figure out how to use it properly.

One significant benefit of menstrual discs is that they can stay in while you can perform your tasks, and some people have even reported that they experience less painful periods while using them.

UNDERWEAR:

The latest newcomer to the period scene is period underwear. They look like regular underwear, except they have a special absorbent layer which prevents leakages onto clothing, and as they are washable, they are one of the most sustainable options available. A good pair will prevent odours and will feel comfortable to the wearer.

They are not the cheapest option, but they certainly pay off when compared to years of spending on disposable pads or tampons. Some people experience leaks on particularly heavy flow days, so they sometimes pair them with another period product. However, this innovative item is evolving quickly, and more absorbent iterations are coming onto the market all the time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr Tyagi is a head of a major research firm, by switching to better, modern-age menstrual hygiene methods (MHM) such as menstrual cups, women can reduce the number of times they have to change their sanitary product in a day. Many women have told us that using menstrual cups has greatly reduced their daily discomfort due to periods," added.

Chirag Pan, CEO, PANHealthcare, Menstrual hygiene and wellness have been known issues in the Indian context. While there has been some progress in recent years, it is imperative that we leverage our strength in the Indian value-based systems and inculcate the importance of good menstrual hygiene from the onset of puberty itself, said

Taylor and Francis, Puberty initiation rites heralding menarche are common across cultures. Paige (1973) reflected that societies with the highest levels of social rigidity and male solidarity also have the strongest codification of menstrual taboos. This may reflect a need to maintain clear sex roles, often by controlling women and their fertility. Social and cultural factors impact on adjustment to menses and have an effect on the early menarche experience.

CONCLUSION:

Younger generation are bought will very little to zero knowledge regarding period blood the most common reason is that their mothers and other women too timid from ventilating the issues with them.

In some cases, adult women may themselves be oblivious about the biological factors or healthy and safe hygienic practices, and hence they pass on the norms, myth or restriction to their descendant. Community with health and education being primary motive can be worthwhile in attaining the awareness in need. There is a necessity to outspread consciousness amid the school staff members regarding menstruation.

Empowering women through essential education and enlarging their role in decision-making can also encourage the small initiative. Women and girls are mostly ostracized from decision-making and the reason behind it is patriarchy and lower literacy levels. Provision of sanitary napkins and adequate facilities for sanitation and washing must be made at one's fingertip keeping the gender outlook in mind.

Sanitary napkins at minimum cost can be made regionally and distributed particularly in rural and slum areas as these are the areas that lack required

access. Government of India has approved a scheme to improve menstrual hygiene for 1.5 Crore adolescent girls by distributing low-cost sanitary napkins in rural areas under the National Rural Health Mission since 2010. However, the scheme is in the pilot phase, there is more to be done in order to achieve the desired goal. There is a need to increase male involvement in these issues and clearing the credence of the male partner is also pertinent in confronting deep rooted social beliefs and cultural taboos. Men and boys have very less information regarding menses, but it is important for them to understand the cardinals of menstruation so they can support their friends, colleagues, wives, daughters, mothers, students, employees, and peers or anyone in need. Sensitization of health workers, accredited Social Health Activists and Anganwadi workers regarding the biology of menses must be done so that they can further propagate this knowledge in the community and actuate social support towards the hyped-up myths related to menstruation. The Health Services Clinics which are pubescentfriendly must have skilled manpower to address such issues.

REFERENCES:

1. Fifth annual Everteen menstrual hygiene survey.
<https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/schools-must-develop-awareness-and-infrastructure-for-periods-5th-annual-everteen-menstrual-hygiene-survey/76041779>
2. World Health Organization. *Adolescent friendly health services. An agenda for change*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2002. [[Google Scholar](#)]
3. Nagaraj C, Konapur KS. Effect of health education on awareness and practices related to menstruation among rural adolescent school girls in Bengaluru, Karnataka. *Int J Prev Public Health Sci*. 2016;2:18–21. [[Google Scholar](#)]
4. WHO. *Young people today. The health of young people: A challenge and promise*. Geneva: WHO; 1993. pp. 1–14. [[Google Scholar](#)]
5. Aniebue UU, Aniebue PN, Nwankwo TO. The impact of pre-menarcheal training on menstrual practices and hygiene of Nigerian school girls. *Pan Afr Med J*. 2009;2:9. [[PMC free article](#)] [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]
6. Haque SE, Rahman M, Itsuko K, Mutahara M, Sakisaka K. The effect of a school-based educational intervention on menstrual health: An intervention study among adolescent girls in Bangladesh. *BMJ Open*. 2014;4:e004607. [[PMC free article](#)] [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]
7. Thakre SB, Thakre SS, Reddy M, Rathi N, Phathak K, Ughade S. Menstrual hygiene: Knowledge, and practices among adolescent school girls of Saoner, Nagpur district. *J Clin Diagn Res*. 2011;5:1027–33. [[Google Scholar](#)]
8. Dasgupta A, Sarkar M. Menstrual hygiene: How hygienic is the adolescent girl? *Indian J Community Med*. 2008;33:77–80. [[PMC free article](#)] [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]