KNOWLEDGE OF NEGATIVE EFFECTS AND USE OF TRADITIONAL HERBS IN PREGNANCY, LABOUR AND PUEPERIUM AMONG WOMEN AGED 18-49 YEARS GWANDA PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to assess the knowledge of effects and use of traditional herbs by women aged 18-49 years at Gwanda Provincial Hospital. The study was a descriptive design that utilized simple random sampling technique to come up with a sample size of 100 participants. Face to face interviews were done using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire used had a total of 29 questions which were divided into three sections namely sections A which comprised of demographic data, section B had questions on knowledge and use of traditional herbs and section C had questions on negative effects on traditional herbs. The results showed that users of traditional herbs were found among all the age groups from 18 years to 49 years and that women used traditional herbs in all stages of pregnancy that is pregnancy, labour and puerperium. Out of 38 participants who used traditional herbs, 12(31.6.0%) admitted fulfillment of desired effects and most women acknowledged precipitate labour as a desired effect as this shortened the duration of labour. Twenty-six (68.4%) participants were anticipating their labour to be normal and fast because they were taking herbs. The study also established that women used herbs for different reasons like augmentation of labour, protecting pregnancy and baby from evil spirit and having a normal non-complicated delivery. For those who did not use herbs the following reasons were cited for non-use, religious reasons, no one to prescribe the herbs for them, no access to the herbs and some said they were informed by nurses that herbs had negative effects on both the mother and the unborn child. The researcher found that even if women used traditional herbs, generally they had little or no knowledge on the negative effects associated with use of herbs. Sixty (60.0%) of the participants had no knowledge on negative effects resulting from use of herbs during pregnancy. Thirteen (13.0%) mentioned precipitate labour, 11(11.0%) mentioned risk of miscarriage and 5(5.0%) said herbs may interfere with medical treatment taken during pregnancy. Fifty six (56.0%) participants had no knowledge on negative effects of using traditional herbs during labour, 21(21.0%) said use of traditional herbs during labour interfered with medications given during labour, 14(14.0%) mentioned fetal distress as one of the negative effects of using herbs during labour, 14(14.0%) mentioned precipitate labour, 17(17.0%) mentioned excessive uterine action and 1(1.0%) mentioned prolonged labour, 2(2.0%) said use of herbs can lead to vaginal lacerations, 2(2.0%) associated use of traditional herbs with post-partum haemorrhage and 29(29.0) had no knowledge of negative effects associated with use of herbs during labour. Twenty (22.0%) associated use of herbs with cancer of the cervix, 8(8.0%) herbs can cause vaginal mucosa erosion, especial those inserted into the vagina. Thirteen (13.0%) participants said use of herbs post-delivery had no problems and 57(57.0%) had no knowledge if herbs had any negative effects if used post-delivery.