Unmet demand for highly effective postpartum contraception in Texas.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: We aimed to assess women's contraceptive preferences and use in the first 6 months after delivery. The postpartum period represents a key opportunity for women to learn about and obtain effective contraception, especially since 50% of unintended pregnancies to parous women occur within 2 years of a previous birth.

METHODS: We conducted a prospective cohort study of 800 postpartum women recruited from three hospitals in Austin and El Paso, TX. Women aged 18-44 who wanted to delay childbearing for at least 24 months were eligible for the study and completed interviews following delivery and at 3 and 6 months postpartum. Participants were asked about the contraceptive method they were currently using and the method they would prefer to use at 6 months after delivery.

RESULTS: At 6 months postpartum, 13% of women were using an intrauterine device or implant, and 17% were sterilized or had a partner who had had a vasectomy. Twenty-four percent were using hormonal methods, and 45% relied on less effective methods, mainly condoms and withdrawal. Yet 44% reported that they would prefer to be using sterilization, and 34% would prefer to be using long-acting reversible contraception (LARC).

CONCLUSIONS: This study shows a considerable preference for LARC and permanent methods at 6 months postpartum. However, there is a marked discordance between women's method preference and actual use, indicating substantial
Unmet demand for highly effective postpartum contraception in Texas.

Unmet demand for highly effective methods of contraception.

**IMPLICATIONS:** In two Texas cities, many more women preferred long-acting and permanent contraceptive methods (LAPM) than were able to access these methods at 6 months postpartum. Women's contraceptive needs could be better met by counseling about all methods, by reducing cost barriers and by making LAPM available at more sites.

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