

Long-Acting Reversible Contraception Patient Satisfaction Six Months After Placement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore patient satisfaction with long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) methods six months after placement. A qualitative descriptive research approach was used to conduct a semi-structured one-on-one phone interview with participants six months after a LARC method of contraception was initiated. Three major themes emerged from the data: satisfaction, including ease of use, efficacy, and menstrual suppression; expectations of side effects; and avoidance of side effects commonly associated with non-LARC methods. Improved patient education may lead to increased uptake of LARC methods and could contribute to a reduced number of unintended pregnancies in the United States.



Introduction

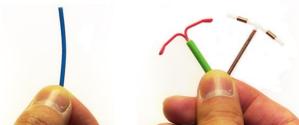


Nearly half of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended, meaning they are unwanted or mistimed. This is often a result of

- Not using contraception
- Using contraception incorrectly
- Using contraception inconsistently

Long-Acting Reversible Contraception

- Highly effective method of contraception for those who are sexually active and wish to avoid or delay pregnancy
- Easy to use
- Can be removed at any time
- 20 times more effective at preventing pregnancy than birth control pills, patch, or ring
- Failure rate < 1%
- Provides protection against unplanned pregnancy for 3-10 years

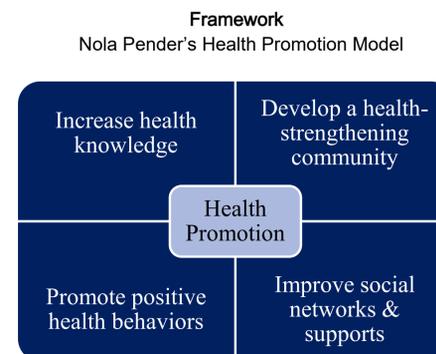


- A woman's reproductive lifespan can be over 30 years and many women will find the need to rely on an effective method of contraception at some point during this span.
- Healthcare providers are a trusted source of information about the various contraceptive methods
- A patient-centered approach is best for contraceptive counseling and may improve the clinician's ability to help a woman select a method of contraception she will use continuously, resulting in a reduction in the number of unintended pregnancies in the United States



Methodology

A qualitative descriptive research design was used for this study.



Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from Clarke University and the two clinics where participants were recruited



- A non-randomized, purposeful convenience sample was utilized to recruit participants from two different clinics in the Midwest United States
- Inclusion criteria
 - Female
 - Between the ages of 18-44
 - Choosing a LARC method (IUD or implant) of contraception

- Semi-structured, open-ended phone interviews were conducted with participants meeting inclusion criteria
- Interviews were conducted six months after placement of the LARC device
- Interviews averaged 30 minutes in duration, were recorded on a password protected audio recorder, and then transcribed verbatim



Results

19 Participants

15 Hormonal IUD

4 Subdermal Implant

Themes

Satisfaction

- 16/19 (84%) of participants expressed satisfaction with their decision to initiate a LARC method of contraception
- Ease of use – desire for contraception that user did not have to think about
- Efficacy – highly effective method that was reversible
- Suppression of Menstruation – desire to have lighter and less painful periods

Expectations of Side Effects

- 17/19 (89%) of participants recall being counseled about side effects including
 - Irregular bleeding/spotting; cramping; pain with insertion; suppression of menstruation
- Several participants did not recall being told how long some of these side effects could last and were frustrated by the duration of side effects
- Additional counseling regarding the insertion process and the associated pain would have been appreciated by many

Avoidance of Side Effects from non-LARC Methods

- Many participants had tried other methods of contraception in the past but experienced undesired side effects such as
 - Weight gain
 - Mood changes
 - Migraines
- Participants were willing to try a method that was less likely to cause these undesirable side effects

Three participants (15.8%) expressed they were unsatisfied with their decision to get a LARC method of contraception. All had chosen a hormonal IUD LARC method. Reasons for dissatisfaction included:

- Duration of irregular bleeding
- Increased vaginal discharge and odor
- Worsening acne
 - This participant did work with her provider and trialed an estrogen-based OCP to try and regulate her acne without success. She was the only participant who had her LARC device removed at the time of the six-month interview.

Discontinuation rate at six-months post insertion for this study was 5.3%

Conclusion



Findings from this study support that the majority of LARC users are satisfied with this method of contraception and there are low discontinuation rates.

While many participants expressed receiving counseling on side effects associated with LARC methods of contraception, there were participants who were unaware of just how long these transient side effects, such as irregular bleeding, could last. While experiencing side effects for some participants was simply an annoyance, it was a source of frustration and dissatisfaction for others. Healthcare practitioners who provide contraceptive counseling should have explicit conversations with patients regarding the potential duration that side effects may occur. Healthcare practitioners should also encourage patients to schedule follow-up appointments to promote continued use and satisfaction of LARC methods.

Choosing to initiate a contraceptive method is a personal choice for a woman. Healthcare providers are in a unique position to empower women to take control of her reproductive health by arming her with information regarding the various contraception options available and collectively choose the method that will work best for her. LARC methods are a highly effective, low maintenance form of birth control. Women can appreciate the ease of use while knowing it can be removed at any time. Despite some of the side effects associated with LARC methods, the benefits of LARC methods greatly outweigh the negative for the majority of users.



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Thank You