

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Family Planning

Several medicines and devices are available to provide long-term, reversible contraception for women.

Generally, these methods work well because the woman does not have to take medicine daily because these options offer from one month to five years of contraceptive protection, depending on which one is chosen.

One of the long-acting family planning methods is the IUD; which is a reversible method. If a woman decides that she wants to become pregnant, she can do so by having the IUD removed by a health care professional.

Selecting the most appropriate long-term contraceptive will depend on a woman's individual preferences and circumstances — for example, when and if she plans to have a pregnancy in the future — as well as her previous and current general and reproductive health.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To correct misconceptions and rumors about the IUD.
- To encourage listeners to seek more information about the long acting contraceptives.
- To learn about the benefits of using the IUD from other women who are using it

The Problem: Low use of long-acting contraceptives

Malawi has made impressive gains in contraceptive prevalence, but the long acting contraceptives are among the least popular methods, according to the most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS2010).

While 42 percent of married women use some form of modern contraception, less than two percent use a long-acting method, either an intrauterine device (IUD) or an implant.

In this bulletin, we will focus on the IUD -- how it works, and its pros and cons for the user.

An IUD is a small device that is usually made of plastic or of plastic and copper. It's intended to be used for several months or years. In Malawi, we use the one with copper.

A doctor or a trained health care worker places an IUD in the woman's uterus. The device works by preventing a man's sperm from reaching the woman's eggs.

The IUD is one of the safest and most effective family planning methods, as it is 99% effective in preventing pregnancy and can remain in place and continue to be effective for up to 10 years, but it can be removed at any time.

According to the DHS 2010, Malawian women are very knowledgeable about most modern contraceptive methods, but they are less so about the IUD. Like any other family planning methods (apart from condoms) the IUD does not protect the user from sexually transmitted diseases including HIV.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand how long-term family planning methods work.

Explain to your listeners what an IUD is and how it works.

When a woman wants to get pregnant, removal is easy and has no adverse effects. A trained health care provider can remove the device at any time and for any reason. After removal, a woman may get pregnant immediately.

The IUD is suitable for most women of child-bearing age, and is also suitable for breastfeeding mothers and those who cannot use hormonal birth control methods.

Benefits of using the IUD include: few side effects, easily reversible, convenient - can be used for years without needing to return to the health center and it doesn't cause discomfort..

It should also be emphasized that the IUD does not protect against sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

It is also important to mention some of the side effects of IUD's. In the first few months, some women may experience longer and

heavier menstrual periods, cramps or slight bleeding. But after the first few months, most women don't notice it anymore. It is advisable to the women to

check for strings each month (usually after the period), to ensure that the IUD is in place. If they notice something unusual, they should rush to the hospital.

Interview a local nurse or doctor about the benefits of using the IUD. Ask the health care worker to help identify women who would be willing to discuss their own use of various contraceptive methods.

What are the advantages of using an IUD compared to taking a birth control pill or having an injection?

You might even host a talk show with various individuals as panelists to discuss the use of various birth control methods.

Discuss the procedure for obtaining various birth control methods for women who might be interested, but aren't aware of the process.

Useful Contacts

- Sandra Mapemba; Population Reference Bureau (PRB); Phone: +265(0)999219789
- PriscaMasepuka; Banja La Mtsogolo: +265(0)999 367 903
- <http://www.prb.org/pdf13/contraceptive-evidence-2013.pdf>
- <https://www.c-changeprogram.org/sites/default/files/Barriers-to-Family-Planning-Use->

