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Background

- In the United States, nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended. In rural areas with limited access to healthcare, the rates are even higher.
- An increasing number of states are authorizing pharmacists to prescribe hormonal birth control. By increasing the number of access points for contraceptive care, it is thought that unintended pregnancies will decrease, especially in medically underserved areas.
- Delano, California is a rural farming community with 13% of live births to teen parents, which is over twice the state average. Over 60% of women have reported an unintended pregnancy. Delano has been designated a Primary Care Shortage Area by the California Healthcare Policy Workforce Commission, and it has become common practice for residents to seek healthcare advice from their community pharmacists prior to seeing their primary care providers.

Objectives

- To explore the current accessibility of birth control for farmworkers in Delano and to assess farmworkers' interest in receiving birth control from pharmacists.

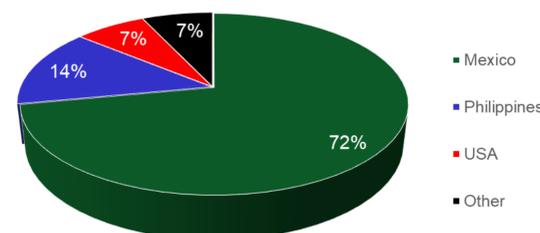
Methods

- A pen-and-paper survey containing 30 multiple-choice questions was administered to 96 female farmworkers in Delano, California during work hours on 08/08/2018 and 08/15/2018.
- The workers were informed that their participation was voluntary, and all data was collected anonymously. Responses were transcribed and analyzed in Microsoft Excel.

Results

- All 96 farmworkers completed the survey, with a median age of 35-39 years. Over 88% identified as Catholic, and 75% were married or in a relationship. A total of 64% did not complete high school, and 57% had incomes below the Federal Poverty Line. The majority of respondents were born in Mexico. **(Figure 1)**

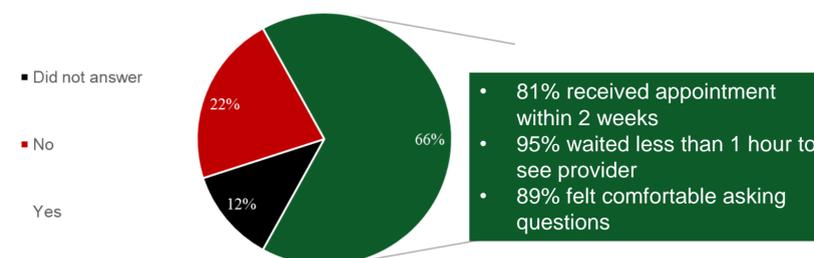
Figure 1. Place of Birth



- Two thirds of the respondents had visited a clinic or doctor's office for birth control in the past year. Of those, 81% were scheduled within two weeks, and 95% waited less than an hour to see the provider. **(Figure 2)**

Figure 2. Access to Birth Control from Clinics & Physicians

Have you visited a clinic or doctor in the last year for birth control services?



- A total of 40% of respondents would be interested in receiving birth control from a pharmacist **(Figure 3)**. Of those who were not interested, the reasons were summarized in **Figure 4**. Of note, no respondents cited religion as a barrier. Only 11% were interested in ordering birth control online (e.g. through a smartphone app).

Figure 3. Interest in Receiving Birth Control from a Pharmacist

Would you be interested in receiving birth control from a pharmacist?

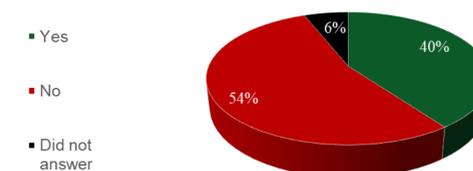
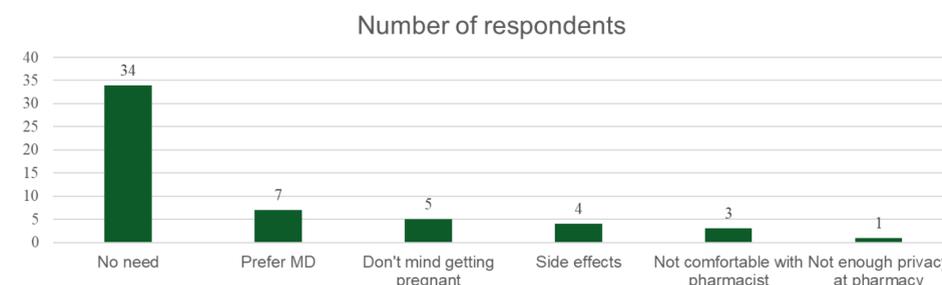


Figure 4. Reasons for Not Being Interested in Birth Control from a Pharmacist



Conclusions

- In this farmworker population, the majority of women who sought birth control were able to receive prescriptions from their existing healthcare providers, with reasonable wait times for appointments. These findings contrast with the county-wide statistics showing a shortage of primary care providers for the number of residents.
- Still, 40% of respondents stated that they would be potentially interested in seeking birth control through their pharmacists, which represents an opportunity for pharmacists to position themselves as additional providers of sexual health services.
- Previous research has shown that patients who have sought emergency contraception through their pharmacists would be more likely to seek a regular method of birth control from them as well.
- These findings suggest that the patient's perception of their pharmacist as a sexual health provider is an important factor in deciding how they access birth control. In order to maximize this opportunity, pharmacists should consider the privacy of their consultation spaces and their own confidence in counseling patients on sexual health-related topics, including LGBTQ- and youth-related issues. In addition, insurance coverage for office visits with pharmacists will be an essential factor in ensuring patient access to services.

Limitations

- The population surveyed is representative of a rural farming community in California, which may have limited generalizability to other populations (e.g. urban, non-Hispanic, higher income and educational attainment).
- The cross-sectional nature of the study limits our ability to draw causal inferences from the data; thus, this study is strictly exploratory in nature.
- As more patients receive contraceptive services from pharmacists, future studies should describe the patient experiences, and educational forums should share best practices from both pharmacist and patient perspectives.

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