PROJECT INFORMATION

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Using a Reproductive Life Planning Website and Action Plan to Help Women Choose and Use Birth Control

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What was the research about?

In the United States, 45 percent of pregnancies aren't planned. A reproductive life plan based on a woman's goals, resources, and values may help her decide whether, when, and how to have children.

In this study, the research team wanted to learn if a website on reproductive life planning helped women to choose and use birth control. The team also wanted to know if the website worked better when used with an action plan. In action planning, a woman makes plans for dealing with barriers to using birth control, such as how to remember to take a pill every day.

What were the results?

The research team didn't find differences in birth control use among women who used reproductive life planning, reproductive life planning plus action planning, or only received information on birth control. Use of birth control increased for all groups during the study. Use of long-acting, reversible contraceptives, such as hormonal implants and intrauterine devices, or IUDs, also increased in all groups.

Who was in the study?

The study included 984 women who had health insurance with a company in Pennsylvania. Most of the women were white (94 percent), had graduated from college (93 percent), and had no children (68 percent). In addition, 45 percent of women were ages 18 to 25, 37 percent were ages 26 to 33, and 18 percent were

ages 34 to 40. None of the women were planning to get pregnant in the next year. At the start of the study, 88 percent of women were using some form of birth control, and 12 percent reported using no birth control.

What did the research team do?

At the start of the study, all women in the study took a survey. The team then assigned the women to one of three groups by chance. The first group viewed an interactive website on reproductive life planning. Information on the site came from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The information helped women decide if they wanted to become pregnant based on their current life goals. The website also gave women information on pregnancy and the birth control options that met their needs. The second group viewed the same website and completed an action plan for their current form of birth control. The third group viewed a website with standard information on common forms of birth control. All groups completed follow-up surveys and revisited their website every six months during the two-year study.

What were the limits of the study?

Most women in the study were white and well-educated. Also, all women had private health insurance and were from only one state. The findings may have been different with women from other backgrounds. At the start of the study, most women already used birth control and were satisfied with their

choices. They may have already known about their birth control options.

Future studies could include women from different backgrounds. Future research could also focus on women who don't always use birth control or on women who want to change their birth control method.

How can people use the results?

Researchers can use the results from this study to learn more about reproductive life planning and action planning programs.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Chuang129.