Reproductive Health Among Women Refugees in Kentucky
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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality is one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Unintended pregnancies and induced abortions are associated with multiple negative consequences. Therefore, reducing unintended pregnancies and preventing maternal mortality related to induced abortions are integral components to achieving these United Nations goals. Lack of education and/or resources may lead to increased pregnancies in developing countries. The purpose of this study was to assess the abortion rate and trend among the refugee population resettling in Kentucky.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: This was a secondary data analysis of the University of Louisville Refugee Health Database. Data were collected from six refugee health screening sites in Kentucky. Female refugees arriving in Kentucky from October 2012 through October 2014 were evaluated. Data collected were entered into a research database (REDCap) and analyzed using SPSS and Tableau. The Chi-Squared test was used to assess statistical significance. P-values of <0.05 were considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

- A total of 674 refugee women from October 2012 to October 2014 who were resettled in Kentucky were evaluated.
- Among those evaluated, 365 were Cubans and 309 were other nationalities.
- Table 1 shows the prevalence of abortions comparing Cubans with all other nationalities. There was a significant difference between the abortion prevalence of Cubans and other nationalities (p=0.01).
- Figure 1 shows the prevalence of abortion by country of nationality among the refugee women resettled in Kentucky.
- Figure 2 shows the frequency of abortions comparing Cuban women with women of all other nationalities.
- Figure 3 shows the number of abortions comparing Cuban women with women of all other nationalities.
- Figure 4 shows the prevalence of abortion by age bracket among Cuban refugees resettled in Kentucky.
- Figure 5 shows birth control methods used by Cuban women between ages 18-44.

Table 1. Prevalence of abortions comparing Cuban women with all other nationalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>No. of women with abortions</th>
<th>No. of women without abortions</th>
<th>Prevalence of abortion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other Nationalities</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

The abortion rate among Cuban female refugees is significantly higher than the other populations of refugees entering Kentucky. Compared to the other nationalities, 55% of Cuban female refugees have had at least one or more abortions. Extrapolating from our data, this is approximately 548 abortions per 1000 Cuban women or a prevalence of 55%. This prevalence is significantly higher when compared to that of the United States, with a prevalence of abortion of approximately 1.4%. Our study also demonstrates that for a large percentage of Cuban females, abortion was not only the result of a one-time event. One Cuban woman reported having 12 abortions over her lifetime. This trend is likely the result of what has been described as the “everydayness of abortion” within Cuban society. Prior to 1938, abortion was illegal in Cuba. Once it became legalized, however, induced abortions were widely available. Furthermore, contraceptive availability was restricted to the most privileged groups in Cuban society, and abortion represented the principal means of regulating fertility for the masses. Contraceptive education was not as prevalent as the medical school curriculum for many years, which left the Cuban community without knowledge of options on matters of fertility control, further propagating the use of abortion as a birth control method.

REFERENCES