

Determinants of Contraceptive Failure, Switching, and Discontinuation

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Introduction

- The demographic impact of contraceptive use depends not only on its prevalence but also on the duration and effectiveness of use.
- As desired family size declines and contraceptive prevalence rises, contraceptive effectiveness becomes an increasingly important determinant of fertility.

Introduction

- In addition to its demographic impact, the analysis of contraceptive discontinuation is important because it can inform efforts to improve service delivery in various ways.
- For instance, the rate at which women discontinue use of a method due to experiencing side effects may indicate that counseling needs improvement and that information about the method needs to be communicated more effectively.

Introduction

- High levels of discontinuation due to access or availability problems suggest that supply and/or distribution mechanisms need examination.
- Combined with knowledge of the modes of delivery for different methods, discontinuation rates can help identify the inadequacies of particular types of service delivery and the potential effects of contemplated changes in modes of delivery.

Introduction

- Settings in which women frequently discontinue one method and switch to another have usually been thought to indicate some level of dissatisfaction with methods or services or responses to actual or feared side effects.
- However, this assumption has been questioned by some researchers who suggest that high rates of method switching may indicate expansive method choice and ease of access with women switching frequently as their circumstances change.
- At the same time, very low rates of switching can be a reflection of restricted options available to couples.

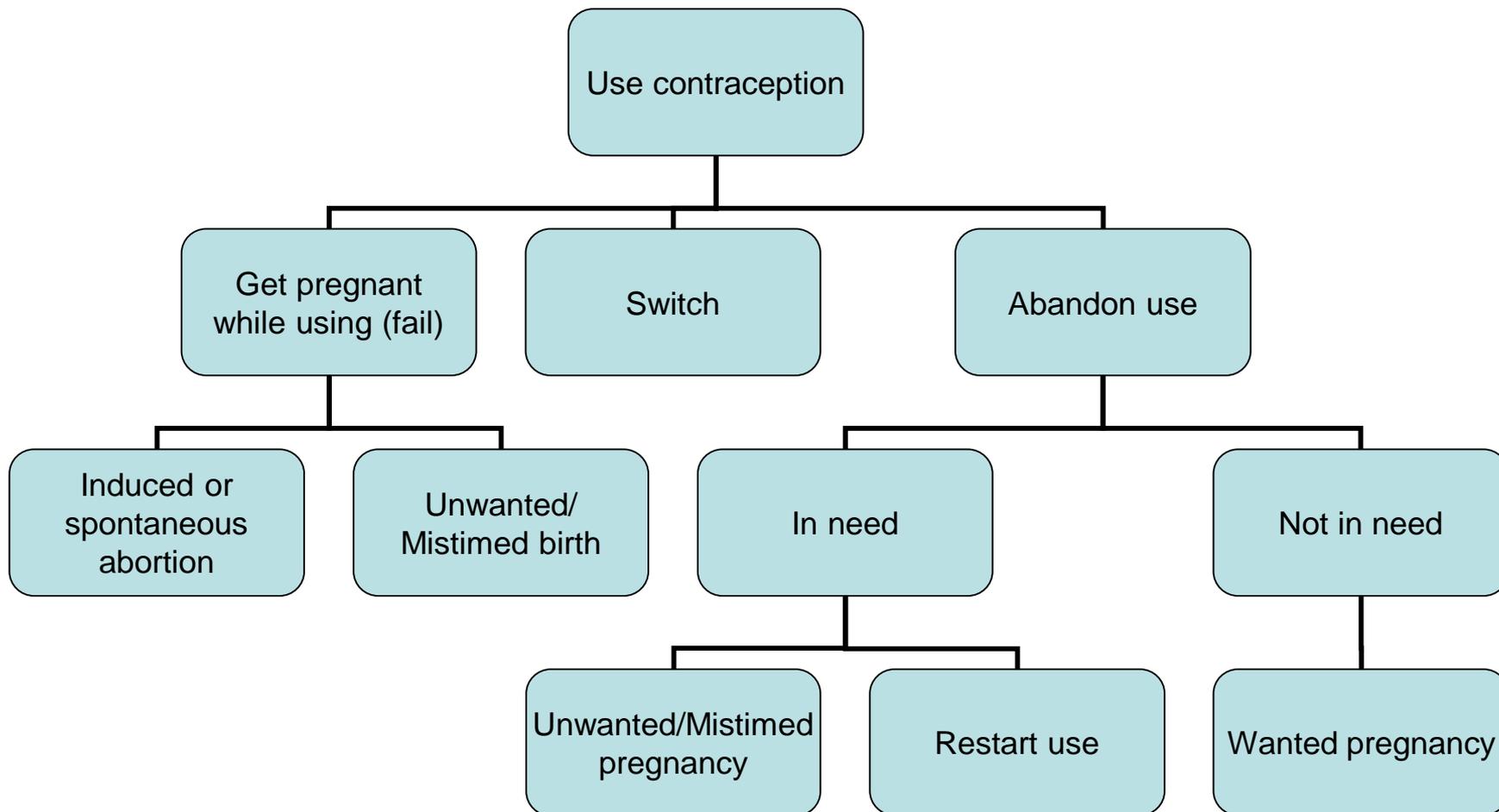
Introduction

- High levels of discontinuation due to contraceptive failure can affect induced abortion rates and, depending on the level of induced abortion, can mean that contraceptive use has a diminished impact on fertility.
- In addition, unplanned pregnancies may have serious implications for women's quality of life and that of their children.
- Finally, estimates of contraceptive failure rates for particular populations are invaluable for women and men in making an informed choice of method and may help to pinpoint those who are most (or least) likely to use a particular method incorrectly.

Twelve-month discontinuation rates by reason for discontinuation, all methods except sterilization

	Failure	To get pregnant	Side effects	Method related	Other	Total
Indonesia 1987	2.8	7.5	8.7		8.7	25.1
Indonesia 1994	3.2	6.2	5.6	10.0	1.4	26.5

Conceptual Model of Contraceptive Use Dynamics



Curtis, Siân L. and Ann K. Blanc. 1997. *Determinants of contraceptive failure, switching, and discontinuation: An analysis of DHS contraceptive histories*. DHS Analytical Reports No. 6. Calverton, Maryland: Macro International Inc.

Definition

- **Failure** is defined as episodes that were ended because the respondent said she got pregnant while using the method.
- **Switching** is defined as episodes that were followed in the next month by use of a different method (including folk methods).
- **Abandoning use** refers to episodes that were followed in the next month by nonuse (including pregnancy but excluding contraceptive failures).

Definition

- **‘Abandon, in need’** is defined as episodes that were discontinued because of side effects, husband’s disapproval, health concerns, access/availability, desire for a more effective method, inconvenience of use, a fatalistic attitude, cost, other unspecified reasons, and ‘don’t know’ responses.
- If the reason for discontinuation is missing, women are considered to still need contraception.

Definition

- **‘Abandon, not in need’** is defined as episodes that were ended due to a desire to get pregnant, infrequent sex, menopause/infecundity, marital dissolution and husband’s death.
- While it is recognized that women may have multiple reasons for discontinuing the use of a contraceptive method, only the main reason is recorded in the questionnaire.

Cumulative rates of contraceptive failure, switching, abandonment of use, and overall discontinuation

12, 24, and 36-month gross cumulative life table rates for failure, switching, abandonment and overall discontinuation of pill, IUD, injectables, condom, and traditional methods, Indonesia, Demographic and Health Surveys, 1991-1995

	Failure	Switching	Abandon, not in need	Abandon, in need	Total	No. of episodes (weighted)
12 months	3.7	13.3	8.9	7.9	30.0	14.022
24 months	7.6	20.5	16.1	11.5	45.5	
36 months	10.4	27.0	23.9	14.8	57.6	

Conclusions

- First, discontinuing use of a contraceptive method is a common event.
- Within two years of starting an episode of use, almost half of the users have discontinued in Indonesia.
- While much of this discontinuation reflects method switching and abandonment due to reduced need for contraception, contraceptive failure and abandonment while still in need of contraception are also relatively common.

Conclusions

- The method chosen by women is strongly associated with the likelihood of each of the four types of discontinuation.
- Users of modern methods have consistently lower rates of failure than users of traditional methods but are more likely to discontinue the method while still in need.

Conclusions

- The relationship between the type of method used and switching tends to be both duration and method specific.
- In general, condoms are associated with high rates of switching at early durations.
- Switching rates for injectables are also high compared to other methods.
- Further, the abandonment of condoms due to reduced need tends to be relatively high compared to other methods, especially during the first year of use.

Conclusions

- In contrast, the risk of contraceptive failure, switching, and abandoning use due to reduced need tend to be lower for the IUD than for other methods.
- The risk of abandoning use while still in need is also generally lower for the IUD than for other modern methods, although it tends to be higher than for traditional methods.

Conclusions

- These results suggest that method choice and method characteristics play an important role in contraceptive discontinuation behavior.
- The precise nature of the relationship between the method used and the risk of contraceptive discontinuation is complicated by the fact that method choice itself is influenced by women's balancing of a number of factors.

Conclusions

- The characteristics of methods, including ease of continuation or discontinuation and the risk of contraceptive failure are likely to be among the factors that women take into account in choosing a method, as is the intended length of use.
- In addition, other characteristics of women are likely to influence both their method choice and their risk of discontinuing use.

Conclusions

- Therefore, method characteristics influence discontinuation rates both directly through influencing the risk of discontinuation among those who choose a particular method, and indirectly through influencing women's choice of methods.
- For example, unlike discontinuation of the other methods in this study, discontinuation of the IUD requires a proactive decision on the part of the user to get the IUD removed.

Conclusions

- This characteristic of the method is likely to reduce discontinuation rates among women who choose the method.
- At the same time, women who have a high risk of discontinuation are probably less likely than women with a low risk of discontinuation to choose the IUD for this same reason.
- Disentangling the extent to which low discontinuation of the IUD is due to the characteristics of the method as opposed to the characteristics of the women who choose it is, therefore, very complex.