



REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INNOVATION EXCHANGE

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Family Planning Counseling that Promotes Meaningful Choice

Innovation presented by: USAID, ideas42, Management Sciences for Health, and Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs

Problem statement		
Providers are not delivering family planning (FP) counseling to postpartum women in a way that empowers women to make an informed choice.		
Circle of Care stage		
Before: Generates Demand	During: Improves Provider Behavior Empowers Clients	After: Reinforces Linkages Enhances Follow Up
Audience(s)		
Health providers (community and facility based), women considering the use of FP, postpartum women.		
Country of implementation or design		
Malawi		
Outcome(s) of interest		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During FP counseling, health providers share comparable information on all FP methods available in the setting. • Ensure quality, unbiased FP counseling to empower women to choose the FP method that most aligns with their needs. 		
The innovation		
An interactive, gamified counseling tool with referral cards;the tool uses a colorful die to randomly select which FP method will be discussed next. This innovation is for use by facility based and community health workers (CHWs) to improve quality of counseling and help women do the following: (1) compare across all FP methods when selecting a method, (2) access any unavailable methods, (3) prompt her to consider method satisfaction, and (4) give her time to actually consider which method is right for her.		



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Why you should consider adapting and scaling this innovation

The counseling tool randomizes the order in which the FP methods are discussed. With the tool, the FP method is described before women are given a chance to guess which method is being discussed. This allows women to listen to the new information before making a judgment on the method based solely on its name (i.e., if she thinks an implant is not for her) and keeps information comparable across all methods based on what must be remembered and a women's return to fertility. The referral card is then filled out with the women and health worker to help her make a choice or think about her options or to follow up if her method of choice is unavailable. In a feasibility study, both CHWs and facility-based providers found the tools helpful in conducting quality FP counseling.

Resources needed to adapt or scale this innovation

This innovation can be implemented by any trained healthcare provider who delivers FP services and/or health education sessions. We recommend that the counseling tool be used during health talks either in the community or in a health facility before FP, antenatal care, and/or pre-natal care, but it can also be used in other settings such as outside the HIV clinic or before immunization campaigns. The referral cards should be used as needed after delivering FP counseling. Costs will vary greatly across contexts, depending on the number of materials printed, type of materials you use and the printing company. However, based on figures taken from implementation in Malawi in early 2020, the estimated total startup cost is \$489 USD for one moderate sized facility with two CHWs, plus ongoing costs to print more referral cards as needed.

Implementation recommendations

This innovation works ideally in areas where group counseling can be conducted (or ideally is already part of health providers' roles) with one-on-one FP consultations as a follow-up. To adapt the counseling tool for a new context, providers need to be able to identify what information women need to be able to compare FP methods. In Malawi, women needed information when they returned to fertility after stopping a method. They also need to learn how to remember to effectively use the method. To adapt the referral card, providers need to be able to identify all the locations where and when women can access a method to adapt the card with the correct information. To build buy-in, we recommend working with the Ministry of Health at all levels and with local health providers (both public and private), including CHWs, to make suggestions for adapting and implementing the tools and to user test all elements of the intervention.

Have more questions? Contact the following people

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Relevant links

<https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/encouraging-fp-counseling-that-promotes-meaningful-choice>
<https://www.ideas42.org/project/encouraging-counseling-that-promotes-meaningful-choice>