Women’s Health and Migration: Health Care of Migrant Farmworker Women

Disclosure Statement

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• Disclosure: We have no real or perceived vested interests that relate to this presentation nor do we have any relationships with pharmaceutical companies, biomedical device manufacturers, and/or other corporations whose products or services are related to pertinent therapeutic areas
✓ Migration of women
✓ Barriers & disparities
✓ Health care issues of concern
✓ Recommendations & resources
Migration

- 24% of farmworkers are women
- Most are married with children
- Women are increasingly migrating alone
- Yearly income from farm work:
  - Women: $11,250
  - Men: $16,250

Sources: NAWS 2005 and SPLC 2010

Barriers to Health Care for Migrant Women

- Isolation in rural areas
- Cultural barriers
- Economic dependence
- Access

Art by RT Freeman; Photo: CKugel
Issues of Concern for Migrant Women

- Reproductive health
- Occupational & environmental health
- Sexual harassment & abuse
- Trafficking

Reproductive Health

- Pregnancy
  - Teen pregnancy
  - Unintended pregnancy
- Contraception
- Cancer screening
- STIs
Pregnancy Care

Their Challenges?
Family Planning

Family Planning Practices

- OCs available at pharmacies
- Depo parties
- Men reluctant to use condoms, vasectomy
- Cancer screening not widely available
- Health care inexpensive
Cancer Screening
Barriers to Screening for Latina Women

- Lack of knowledge about breast and cervical cancers
- Embarrassment
- Fear
- Discomfort
- Cost/lack of health insurance
- Lack of regular care or provider
- Lack of transportation
- Mobility—lack of follow up on test results/tx

Environmental & Occupational Health: Women in Agriculture
Occupational Health Risks

- General working conditions
- Pesticide exposures
- Other chemical exposures
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Dermatological problems
- Heat exposure
Women and Pesticides

- Higher vulnerability due to reproductive health consequences
- More adipose tissue
- Changes in weight and body composition with pregnancy
- Pesticides may mimic hormones and cause endocrine disruption

Exposure Pathways

- Types
  - ingestion in food or water
  - inhalation
  - contact with skin or eyes
- Take-home pathway
Risks to Family Members

- "Take home" exposure
- Drift
- Home application of pesticides
- Lawn and vegetable and flower gardens

Exposure Pathways

- Breast milk
- Placenta—mother to baby
- Blood-brain barrier not fully developed in infants
Pesticides & Pregnancy Research

- Impossible to do controlled studies on humans
- Animal research difficult to translate to humans
- Difficult to study short-vs. long-term effects of exposure

Real lives

Ag-Mart and Carlitos

AP Photo
Within 7 weeks of one another...
4 women lived in the same labor camps and worked in the same fields in North Carolina and Florida

4th baby with similar birth defects in Mexico

Carlitos born without arms or legs
Jesus born with Pierre Robin syndrome
Violeta born with multiple birth defects, died within 3 days

Sexual Abuse and Migrant Women

Source: MCH Hombres Unidos Curriculum
“Sexual violence and sexual harassment experienced by farmworkers is common enough that some farmworker women see these abuses as an unavoidable condition of agricultural work.”
–Human Rights Watch
“Cultivating Fear”

Sexual Harassment & Assault

- Increasing numbers of women immigrating for work in male dominated settings
- Vulnerability during travel & border crossings
- Jan 2005—first sexual harassment case in ag industry taken to trial→$1 million settlement
✓ Modern-day slavery
✓ Thousands are trafficked into the US annually—80% are women
✓ Victims are coerced to work in:
  - prostitution or the sex entertainment industry
  - labor exploitation—domestic servitude, restaurant work, janitorial work, sweatshop factory work and migrant agricultural work.

Photos: Jose Rosa
Solutions in Health Care

- Walk-in versus appointments; scheduling
- Group visits
- Fotonovelas, videos, and promotoras rather than literature based education
- Resources for language enhancement
- OUTREACH
Cultural adaptations

*Promotoras* or lay health educators:

- Build trust
- “Translate” health information
- Liaison to conventional care
- Relationship centered

Resources
MCN Website

✓ Clinician Resources
  • Online courses
  • Archived webcasts
  • Tools, forms, policies, etc.
  • Women’s health page

✓ Patient Education
  • Lo que bien empieza...
  • IPV resources

www.migrantclinician.org
Resources, Training, Technical Assistance, and Information from MCN

www.migrantclinician.org

Patient Education

✓ Comic books
✓ Resources & training manuals for *promotores*

Illustrations: Salvador Sáenz from MCN’s *Lo que bien empieza…*
Lo Que Bien Empieza...

- Health educators talk to patients about how to minimize exposure
- Developed in response to requests from clinicians

Aunque Cerca...Sano

Helps farmworker families minimize the risks of pesticide exposure in the field and at home
Lead Guidelines for the Pregnant Migrant Woman

Guidelines
Migrant women may not be recognized as being pregnant by medical professionals. Yet they present a host of risk factors: Limited medical visits, unsecured employment, lack of nutrition, and living in crowded housing. These factors put children at risk and increase the likelihood of a miscarriage. These factors may contribute to lead poisoning, and can negatively affect fetuses.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that pregnant women be screened for lead exposure. However, it is important to note that pregnant women are more sensitive to lead exposure and may experience adverse health effects.

Guidelines for pregnant women at risk for lead exposure include:

1. Conduct blood lead levels for pregnant women who are at risk for lead exposure.
2. Encourage women to avoid lead sources.
3. Educate women about the risks of lead exposure.
4. Provide resources for prenatal care.

MCN IPV Resources

MCN IPV Resources is a program that provides support and resources to victims of intimate partner violence. They offer a variety of services, including counseling, legal assistance, and financial support.

For more information, please visit: [MCN IPV Resources Website]
Other Resources

- Text4Baby [www.text4baby.org](http://www.text4baby.org)
- Rural Women’s Health Project ([www.rwhp.org](http://www.rwhp.org)) pregnancy *fotonovelas*
- Teach with Stories Prenatal Care—*fotonovela* series ([www.augercommunications.com](http://www.augercommunications.com))
- Pesticides & pregnancy handouts ([www.wakehealth.edu](http://www.wakehealth.edu))
- SPLC Esperanza Project “Voices for Justice” handbook for low-wage immigrant women about their rights in the workplace and the steps they should take
- Legal Momentum Immigrant Women Program ([www.legalmomentum.org](http://www.legalmomentum.org)) legal rights for immigrant women
- Trafficking information: [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)

Questions?
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