

Best Practice: 2

1. Title of the Practice

Promoting Women Health and Hygiene: The Benefits of using Sanitary Pads

2. Objectives of the Practice

- i. Creating awareness on menstruation-menstrual hygiene and management
- ii. Access to sanitary napkins to girl students and women of locality
- iii. Ensuring safe and environment friendly disposal of sanitary pads
- iv. To reduce absenteeism from classes during menstruation which leads to poor performance

3. The Context

Most women in the rural areas face prejudiced attitudes on menstruation, due to social and cultural restrictions. They experience embarrassment and stress during periods. In general, girls lack awareness or have inadequate information about menstruation.

All the students of our college are from rural background and hail from economically weaker sections. Many a time due to financial constraints girls are deprived of access to sanitary napkins. This was resulting in skipping classes. The women of surrounding areas of the college where the awareness programme was conducted (Jamai para, Akui, Bankura) are also deprived of access to sanitary napkins and use other means of protection which are mainly the reasons for problems like UTI and others

Non accessibility of proper menstrual protection products and nonhygienic practices leads to physical and mental stress. Therefore, it was felt that menstruation, should not come in the way of our girl students performance. Hence it was planned to conduct a program for creating awareness and free the girl students and women of locality from inconvenience and health risks. They should be able to participate in daily activities during their periods without being subjected to stigma.

4. The Practice

The inconvenience and health risks faced by our girl students and women of locality for not having access to sanitary napkins during periods was discussed in our college. It was decided to conduct an awareness program for the girl students and local women and provide sanitary pads. The initial amount was contributed by the fund raised by the members of Teachers' Council. Lady admin staff volunteered to maintain the distribution of sanitary pad. The Sanitary pad is being distributed by the distribution system is maintained by college teaching staff and students and an attendance sheet is maintained by them.

Awareness program, 'Promoting Women Health & Hygiene: The Benefits of using Sanitary Pads' is conducted in the locality. Importance of menstrual hygiene, menstrual hygiene products, problems caused by the use of other materials such as old rags and other unhygienic practices were discussed. Detailed information on management of hygiene associated with the menstrual process was given. We also arranged a movie show (Pad Man, a 2018 biographical comedy-drama film written and directed by R. Balki) to spread awareness regarding women's menstrual hygiene and the viewers, mostly local women were motivated by the movie.

5. Evidence of Success

The awareness program helped to understand that menstruation is a normal biological process, the facts related to the menstrual cycle and managing it with dignity, without discomfort. They are following healthy way to manage periods.

Some of the feelings expressed by the girl students and local women are :

- i. They feel safe in case of unexpected menstruation.
- ii. Help them to manage periods, they need not carry the pads in their bags.
- iii. Help them to overcome the menstruation pressure,
- iv. Helped to maintain healthy menstruation and concentrate on studies. Reduced the risk of urinary tract infections because of using damp menstrual clothes, using the sanitary pads for longer time.
- vii. The percentage of Sanitary napkins used among Akui jamai para village women has increased.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required There is little hesitation to collect sanitary pads. Sustaining the program in terms of –

Long term plan: Due to financial constrains at present the plan is executed by the college in a small way. A sanitary pad vending machine has to be installed in the college premises.

Proper disposal of sanitary napkin: At present used pads are disposed in dustbins, which is an unhygienic method. Hence incinerators have to be installed for the proper disposal.

Our college has a Lady's common room attached to the college office. Students find it difficult to reach the place because of the busy schedule and also during unexpected periods they feel uncomfortable to cover the distance.

The women of the locality cannot overcome their reservedness to contact with college and ask about their needs during their menstruation.
