

Abstract Title

Get a Permanent Smile—A Pilot Project to Increase Awareness Of and Access To No-scalpel Vasectomy Services in Ghana

Key Words

Vasectomy, contraception, family planning, repositioning, men

Learning Objectives

- 1) to describe challenges around the provision of vasectomy services
- 2) to learn about the role that men can play in family planning
- 3) to describe interventions that create awareness and improve the image of vasectomy while creating and improving service capacity

Background

Vasectomy is a viable contraceptive choice for African men when site interventions that focus on issues of quality and access are coupled with effective and strategic demand awareness interventions. While researchers and program managers have suggested that vasectomy is unacceptable to most African men and will remain so, recent programs that strategically increase vasectomy services availability and quality, while addressing the methods myths, misperceptions and low awareness show promising success. The barriers to vasectomy acceptance—and potential impact of the interventions—are remarkably similar in different countries, indicating that the solutions presented here can be adapted to the Africa region. This poster presentation will highlight lessons learned from vasectomy introduction in East Africa and a campaign currently underway in Ghana.

Vasectomy is safe, simple, but underutilized. Worldwide an estimated 40 million couples are protected from unwanted pregnancy by vasectomy, however, in Africa fewer than 120,000 couples use this method. Outside southern Africa, vasectomy prevalence in Africa rarely exceeds one tenth of one percent and has remained relatively constant over the past decade. Research links this underutilization to low awareness, and the prevalence of myths and misconception about vasectomy, and to the failure of many health professionals to make information and services available and accessible.

For many years the blame for the relative neglect or underutilization of vasectomy has been placed on men—they do not want to take responsibility for family planning. Yet experience suggests otherwise—men do care about avoiding pregnancy and want to share the responsibility for family planning with their partners. In Africa nearly one in four couples who are using contraception use a contraceptive method—vasectomy, condoms, withdrawal, or periodic abstinence—that requires the active cooperation or participation of men.

In Kenya a 2-month media campaign that included radio and print messages, use of radio call in shows and 'hotlines' to link consumers to NGO and private sector NSV providers in Nairobi resulted in 130 calls to the hotline and clinic walk-ins occurred during the campaign period.

In Ghana a similar 4-month campaign that includes TV, radio and print messages, community outreach and use of a hotline to link consumers to public, NGO and private sector NSV providers in Accra and Kumasi resulted in over 200 calls to the hotline and clinic walk-ins during the initial two months of the campaign period. During the first six weeks of the campaign, the number of vasectomies performed exceeded the total number of procedures that they had done in preceding year.

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