

Can contraceptive decision aids improve care and effective method use? A systematic review protocol

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Background:

Knowledge is a key determinant of contraceptive self-efficacy. However, patients report continued barriers to obtaining consistent and accurate contraceptive information due to difficulties accessing healthcare providers or poor-quality care. Decision aids are tools that can be used to educate patients about their contraceptive options and make values-based choices. Although they are often available online, many people prefer to receive contraceptive information from a healthcare provider. There are opportunities to improve access to decision aids and enhance contraceptive counselling in clinics and community settings using them. The objectives of this systematic review are to: examine the effectiveness of decision aids when used in contraceptive counselling on contraceptive choice and use; compare the effectiveness of clinic-based and community-based decision aid counselling; and determine whether effectiveness is associated with socioeconomic status.

Methods:

The search was conducted by the Cochrane Fertility Regulation Group's Information Specialist, for all published and unpublished studies and grey literature since 2000. Two authors are currently screening 3,930 titles and abstracts. After review of full-text articles, data will be extracted from those included according to the outcome domains: decisional quality, experience of counselling, health, cost-effectiveness and adverse events. Cochrane 'Risk of Bias 2' will be used to assess bias for intention-to-treat effects for health and decisional quality primary outcomes and adverse effects. If appropriate, risk at baseline, and odds ratios for dichotomous and mean difference for continuous measures of treatment effects will be calculated with 95% confidence intervals.

Results:

Subgroup analyses will detect clinical variation according to socioeconomic status and between clinic and community-based interventions. We will perform sensitivity analyses if sufficient data are available, removing studies with high risk of bias.

Conclusion:

Decision aids help people make value-based choices. Determining the effectiveness of decision aids in contraceptive counselling is important prior to conducting implementation activities, to increase their use in practice.

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