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Awareness of Folic Acid Intake among Women in the Childbearing Age in Hail Region—Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the awareness of folic acid, timing of folic acid supplementation and source of knowledge of folic acid intake in Hail region-Saudi Arabia. A sample of 300 married women in the childbearing age (19 - 45 years) in Hail in the period between October/2011 and January/2012 participated in a survey study regarding awareness and use of folic acid before and during pregnancy. Participant women were asked to respond to different questions related to age, level of education, occupation, monthly income, gravidity, and other information concerning folic acid awareness, specific knowledge, supplementation practices, and source of knowledge about the preconceptional intake of folic acid. While 91.0% of the subjects were aware of folic acid, 81.0% knew that folic acid could prevent neural tube defects and 84.0% of the subjects took folic acid prior or during a certain stage of pregnancy. Nonetheless, only 10.0% of the subjects who proclaimed that they know the proper timing for folic acid supplementation recognized that folic acid should be taken prior and during the first trimester of pregnancy. University education was the strongest predictor of folic acid knowledge and university educated subjects had significantly ($P < 0.01$) higher folic acid supplementation compared to subjects with lower educational level. Women with lower gravidity and those with planned pregnancies reported significantly ($P < 0.05$, and $P < 0.01$, respectively) higher folic acid supplementation. University education was the strongest predictor of folic acid knowledge. Health care providers were the main source of knowledge of folic acid education. It is recommended that health care professionals and media need to emphasize more on educating women about the importance of taking folic acid supplementation in the proper time.

KEYWORDS

Folic acid; Awareness; Supplementation; Saudi Arabia

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