

Peru: Introducing the Standard Days Method into the National Family Planning Program

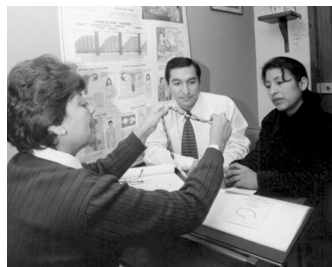
Country Background

Peru, home to over 26 million people, has successfully increased use of contraceptives from 46 percent of married women in 1986 to 70 percent in 2000. However, distinct differences in family planning use exist between urban and rural areas. Rural and less educated women have lower contraceptive prevalence rates than other women, and they rely more heavily on traditional methods. Access to family planning services, like other health care services, continues to be significantly better for urban than for rural couples.

Of the 70% of women using contraceptives, 75% use a modern method and 25% a traditional method with periodic abstinence or “rhythm” used by a large percentage of these women.¹ The formulas they use for rhythm are often incorrect: only 62% of women using a periodic abstinence method knew when during the month they are fertile. In 2000, one in eight married women said she wanted to limit or space future births, but was not using a family planning method. The unmet need for family planning was higher in rural areas (20%) than in urban areas (9%), largely due to differences in access to services.

One of the challenges facing Peru is expanding access to family planning, particularly for the poor, less educated and rural underserved populations. The government’s response to this need is to ensure that women have information and counseling to achieve their individual desires with respect to the number and spacing of children.²

How the SDM is Being Introduced



Integrating the SDM is part of a national effort to expand family planning access.

The Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University has been working with the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Peru, to introduce the Standard Days Method™ (SDM) into family planning

services offered in MOH facilities. The Standard Days Method, which is 95% effective in preventing pregnancy, identifies days 8 through 19 of the menstrual cycle as days when pregnancy is likely. It is most effective for women with menstrual cycles between 26 and 32 days long.³ Most women who use the Standard Days Method use CycleBeads™, a visual tool that helps them know when they are on a potentially fertile day.

As a first step in introducing the method, a pilot effort is being conducted in San Martin, one of 34 Health Directorates (DISA) in the country. The introduction process involved first the conduct of formative research to guide the adaptation of the Institute’s training, provider and client materials. Health personnel were then trained in how to provide the Standard Days Method, enabling them to include the method in their services. Communication activities were designed to increase community awareness about the method. Lastly, informational and promotional activities will be carried out at both the facility and DISA levels to raise awareness

of the method in the general population. Health providers at all levels—from physicians to health promoters—are being informed about the Standard Days Method, though obstetricians (midwives) are being trained to provide counseling. Local trainers identified by DISA officials have been trained to train providers, with technical support from the Institute.

Because one of the main goals of this pilot effort is to test a service delivery model for the Standard Days Method that can be replicated at the regional or national level, the implementation process is being closely monitored and evaluated. Evaluation activities include assessing the effectiveness of the training, learning about client use and satisfaction, and determining demand and acceptance for the Standard Days Method from service delivery sites.

Health providers see the SDM as helping address a need among women who want a natural method.

What We Are Learning

Through the on-going monitoring of this process, the Institute is learning a great deal about acceptability and demand for the Standard Days Method. The Institute is also identifying lessons on how to introduce Standard Days Method into public sector services in other sites in Peru.

- The Standard Days Method has been well received by providers at the clinic level, DISA managers and officials of the Ministry of Health. Managers and providers see the method as helping to address a need among women who want a natural method. In addition, they see the method as providing an always-available family planning option

when clinics experience contraceptive stock-outs.

- Satisfied users have been the primary “word-of-mouth” promoters of the method.
- Involving DISA trainers and MOH supervisors as part of the Standard Days Method training team has been important in building staff capability in the method in the public sector as well as in winning acceptance and ownership of the method.
- The Standard Days Method training model appears to be feasible for adoption by the MOH.
- The technical support provided by an external group such as the Institute is particularly important during the early stages of the Standard Days Method introduction.

Preliminary results of the evaluation of the pilot effort will be available in July, 2003. ☺

For more information on this project, contact Beth Yeager at byeager@isrperu.org, Marcos Arevalo at arevalom@georgetown.edu or visit our website: www.irh.org.

Endnotes: ¹ Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud (ENDES). Peru. 2000.

² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Population Trends: Peru. Washington, D.C., March, 1999.

³ Arevalo M, Jennings V, Sinai I. Efficacy of a New Method of Family Planning: the Standard Days Method, Contraception, 2002; 65:333-338.

The **Institute for Reproductive Health** conducts research and provides technical assistance on expanding access to methods of family planning and improving options for women and couples worldwide.

For more information about us, contact:

Institute for Reproductive Health
4301 Connecticut Ave., Suite 310, Washington, DC 20008
Tel: 202-687-1392 Fax: 202-537-7450
irhinfo@georgetown.edu www.irh.org