



Knowledge and attitude of sonologists towards PCPNDT Act 2003

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ABSTRACT

Recently , in the state of Maharashtra,India ,many doctors were in the news for alleged violations of the PCPNDT Act .A study was conducted to know their attitude towards implantation of PCPNDT Act. A questionnaire was given to them and many felt PCPNDT act is not the only answer to social ills.Many sonologists were of the view that much needs to be

done .

KEYWORDS: PCPNDT act, sonologists , USG machine sealing, harassment of sonologists.

Introduction

The Preconception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (prohibition of sex selection) (PCPNDT) Act(1) was implemented in 2003 , by Government of India, in view of the falling gender ratio, because of the misuse of sonography machines for prenatal gender determination by doctors. Not much data are available on the perception of the doctors on the PCPNDT Act. With this background in mind, the present study was undertaken.Only one study from Jamnagar was available .(2)Also, because of wide coverage by media on sex selective abortions and census 2011 reports , all sonography centres in Marathwada and subsequently Maharashtra were inspected, many given notices and some centres sealed for alleged violation of PCPNDT Act.While , we , in this study completely have faith in PCPNDT Act 2003,and know that it is important to implement the Act in word and spirit,also find some difficulties faced by general public including doctors in due course of time.

Materials and Methods

All obstetricians and radiologists who are major stakeholders in the implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act were interviewed in Aurangabad & Jalna. Out of 238 obstetricians and 53 radiologists, 126 obstetricians and 28 radiologists agreed to participate. In this study, the participant doctors were given pretested and structured proforma to give their opinion on various aspects related to the PCPNDT Act, viz. difficulties faced, penalties for violation, punishment for violation, genuineness of information (Forms F and G), repercussions of the PNDT Act, demand for gender determination, and suitable amendments in the PNDT Act between July 2012 and September2012.

Proforma of questionnaire –

Name of sonologist – (optional)

Years of practice in sonology –

Did you face any difficulty in PCPNDT inspection ? – Yes Or No

If Yes , please specify –

Do you know provisions for violation of PCPNDT act ? – Yes or No

Do you know incomplete filling of Form F amounts to criminal offence ? – Yes or No

Do you think Form F and declaration form are genuinely filled ?- Yes or No

Do you think penalties for violation are too much ? – Yes or No

Who should be punished for prenatal sex determination ?

Only the mother -

The doctor and patient -

The doctor, patient and relative involved-

Only the family member involved -

Do you think irregularities in F form mean sex selection ? Yes or No

Do you think PCPNDT Act is the only tool to improve gender ratio ? - Yes or No

What will be the repercussions of PCPNDT Act on use of technology of ultrasonography in future ?

What percentage of pregnant women clients you see in outpatient department demand prenatal sex determination ?

Do you suggest any amendments in implementation of PCPNDT act ?

Only 7 % of the doctors felt that the PCPNDT Act is the only tool for improving the gender ratio. As many as 80 % of the doctors were of the opinion that the PCPNDT Act is not the only tool to improve the gender ratio while 13 % had no opinion.

About half (49%) of the doctors were of the view that penalties for violating the PCPNDT Act are very heavy while other half (51%) did not feel so.

A total of 75% of the doctors were of the view that publicity through the media of court cases related to breaches of the PCPNDT Act by doctors is beneficial for improving the gender ratio as it will act as a deterrent against flouting the provision of the PNDT Act by doctors. A total of 25% of the doctors did not feel the same way.

On inquiring regarding completing forms F and G genuinely and completing it with true information, about half (50%) of the doctors stated that they completed these forms genuinely and with correct information; 34% stated that the information completed was absolutely false and 16% were not sure.

With regard to the impact of the PCPNDT Act on the future progress of the invention related to use of ultrasound technique in medical sciences; as many as 67% of doctors felt that the PCPNDT Act can hamper the future course of medical invention, 30% of the doctors did not think so, and 3% of the doctors did not know. When asked about the demand from doctors for gender determination by patients in the Outpatient department, 97% confirmed that there is such a demand from patients or her family.

A total of 34 % of the doctors were in favor of dropping the provision of registration of a sonography machine on a periodical basis i.e., every 3 years and felt that it should only be a one-time registration. Similarly, these same doctors also felt that if changing the place of the clinic, a clause of fresh registration for the same sonography machine should be omitted from the PCPNDT Act. Of the remaining doctors, 58% had

no such opinion and 8% did not give any response.

A total of 9.09% of the doctors felt that along with the doctor, the patient and family members involved should also be punished for violating the PCPNDT Act. Another 15.58% of doctors felt that both the doctor and the patient should be punished, a majority 63.63 % felt only the mother should be punished, and 11.68% felt that only the family member should be punished [Table 1].

Table 1-To whom punishment should be given for violation of the PCPNDT Act

Doctors' views	No. of respondents	Percentage
Only to mother	98	63.63
Both doctor and patient	24	15.58
Doctor, patient and relative involved	14	9.09
Only to family member involved	18	11.68
Total	154	100

The various problems faced by doctors because of the PCPNDT Act were: excessive clerical work (80.51%), administrative difficulties (68.83%), excessive police interference (27.27%), and social difficulties (55.19%) [Table 2].

Table 2 –Different kinds of difficulties faced by doctors because of the PCPNDT inspections

Difficulties	No. of respondents	Percentage
Excessive clerical work	124	80.51
Social difficulties	85	55.19
Hospital administrative difficulties	106	68.83
Police interference more than expected	42	27.27
Confusion in MTP act and PCPNDT act	132	85.71
No difficulties	15	9.74

Discussion

Almost all (97%) of the doctors affirmed that there is demand for gender determination of the fetus by patients. This is quite shocking and points toward the mindset of society toward a girl child. The observations highlight the need for sensitization of the society towards the hazards of adverse gender ratios and changing their attitudes towards girl children. Certain amendments were suggested in the PCPNDT Act by doctors viz. registration of sonography machines should be one time and not periodical, on changing the place of the clinic there should be no re-registration for the same sonography machine, etc.

There was widespread confusion about whether obstetricians-gynaecologists were authorized to conduct sonography without 6 months training ?

A majority of the doctors felt that the penalties for violating the PCPNDT Act are too stringent and were in favor of liberalization in punishment for minor administrative lapses in implementation of the PCPNDT Act such as incomplete F form filling. It is suggested that while revising the Act, these suggestions may be given consideration. A majority of the doctors believed measures to improve the gender ratio should be multipronged. Thus, other social measures should be taken to raise the gender ratio. A majority of the doctors (63.63%) felt that only the mother (patient) involved in gender determination should be punished for violation of the PCPNDT Act. Major difficulties incurred by doctors in the implementation of the PCPNDT Act were: excessive clerical work (80.51%), administrative difficulties (68.83%), and excessive police interference (27.27%). Harassment of doctors has been reported by many newspapers.Many doctors in the region have stopped sonography services and medical termination of pregnancy services in this area and have surrendered registrations in fear of action even for clerical mistakes.A person caught on camera in sting operation gets the same punishment as one who commits clerical mistake.This is creating havoc in medical fraternity.

Conclusions

Doctors were in favor of the PCPNDT Act but felt something extra needs to be done to improve the gender ratio. Observations on perception of doctors regarding the PCPNDT Act indicate a need for suitable amendments to this Act.

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