

Informed choice in family planning and change in women's contraceptive choice: evidence from two rounds National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Survey in China

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Extended abstract

China's family planning program used to put intensive effort to limit births as a fundamental part of its sustainable development goals. As a strategy, the government in effect have limited contraceptive choice through policies that promote long-term and permanent contraception over temporary methods. For decades, women (or couples) especially those in rural China were not able to choose contraception at their own will. Contraceptive use has been characterized by its direct linkage with birth and parity. Women have to use IUD after the first birth and to use sterilization after the second birth, and usually there was no counseling about choice of contraceptive methods and medical follow-up¹. As a consequence, contraceptive use in China has been characterized by dominant users of IUD and sterilization, combined accounting for over 90% of contraceptive users².

Following the ICPD recommendations in 1994, the Chinese government has launched a program of Quality of Care (QoC) re-focusing the national family planning program on client needs, informed choice of contraceptives, and better quality services³. The government help insure the right to informed choice by putting the principle into law: *The Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China* (2001) clearly states that "the state creates conditions to ensure individual citizens knowingly

¹ Kaufman, J., Zhang E.L., Xie Z.M. (2005). Quality of Care in China: From Pilot Project to National Program. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Population Association of America, Philadelphia 2005.

² Li, B.H and Lin, X.H. (2004). A Study of Contraceptive Use and Reproductive Health in China. <http://www.chinapop.gov.cn>

³ Kaufman, J., Zhang E.L., Xie Z.M. (2005). Quality of Care in China: From Pilot Project to National Program. Paper presented at the annual meeting of Population Association of America, Philadelphia 2005.

choose safe, effective, and appropriate contraceptive methods.” (Article 19). Reflecting this principle, a national campaign was established in 2003 to promote the ‘Advanced County (City/District) of QoC in Family Planning’ in the whole country. Informed choice in family planning increases a clients’ basic knowledge on contraceptive methods and awareness of the relevant legal regulations. It enable the client to choose the safest and most effective contraceptive methods that suits them best.

The aim of this paper is to compare the influence of the informed choice in family planning on current choice before and after the nation-wide scale up of QoC program. We ask the research questions: Is there evidence of more informed choice amongst contraceptive users in China? Is the use of methods apart from IUD and sterilization on the increase? What factors are associated with the use of different methods? Who is motivating the choice of women (self-reported in the questionnaires)?

The analysis is based on two rounds National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Survey (2001 and 2006), which are repeated national cross-sectional surveys. The surveys were conducted by the Population and Family Planning Commission of China. Both surveys were based on a multi-stage probability sampling method and focusing on childbearing aged women’s fertility, contraception and reproductive health conditions, with detailed data on contraceptive behavior and a broad range of explanatory factors⁴⁵.

To demonstrate women’s contraceptive choice change after the nationwide expansion of QoC program, the inclusion criteria are married women age 15 to 49 at each round of the survey, who are currently using any contraceptive method, and who start to use this method no longer five years prior to the survey. The sample size is 9788 women in 2001 survey and 7611 women in 2006 survey. Two rounds of survey are combined for the analysis. The unit of analysis is reproductive aged women. The study applied multinomial logistic regression modeling to demonstrate women’s contraceptive choice change.

⁴ National Population and Family Planning Commission. 2003. Documentation Collection of Surveys on Family Planning & Reproductive Health. Beijing

⁵ National Population and Family Planning Commission. 2007. Documentation Collection of Surveys on Family Planning & Reproductive Health. Beijing

The preliminary results show evidence of :

- More informed choice among contraceptive users;
- Apart from IUD and sterilization (both were historically emphasized by the Family Planning Program), the use of condom is on the increase;
- Over the time, condom use has increased in both urban and rural areas, but the increase in the rural areas is higher than that in urban areas;
- Rather than the family planning staff, women/couples are motivating the choice of women.