THE MEANINGS, PERCEPTIONS AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES
ON THE UTILIZATION OF A VOLUNTARY HIV TESTING
SERVICE DURING PRENATAL CARE AMONG
PREGNANT WOMEN IN HALONG CITY,
QUANGNINH PROVINCE, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the increasing number of children infected with HIV from HIV infected mothers, and a large proportion of pregnant women who refuse to have a voluntary HIV test, this research aimed at understanding the cognitive aspects related to pregnant women’s refusal to have a test focusing on the meanings, perceptions and social influences. The qualitative approach was applied based on in-depth interview technique with fourteen pregnant women selected purposely.

The findings revealed that the meaning of voluntary HIV testing is to confirm HIV status and to protect others from HIV infection due to women’s giving birth. HIV/AIDS is always associated with unhealthy people, so pregnant women who perceived they are not at risk to HIV infection based their evaluation on their couple’s healthy behavior and healthy social relationships. The perceived potential negative aspects of learning HIV status include a high rate of transmission of virus to infants, complications during pregnancy, threat of the death to mother and child, stigmatization and discrimination. Having an HIV test pushes pregnant women in to a struggle between a limited benefit and a number of obstacles including husband’s disagreement, emotional stress, and what others might think, and benefits belonging to the community rather people who take the test, while there is a lack of suitable government support. The pregnant women presented their viewpoints on other’s refusal to have a test and a weak physicians’ offer for an HIV test and cultural beliefs as factors contributing to their reluctance. The perceived severity of knowing HIV status, the perceived disadvantages and social-cultural influences play as barriers preventing pregnant women from utilizing a test.

Recommendations are proposed in an attempt to encourage women to participate in HIV screening which consists of changing views toward HIV/AIDS and removing barriers of access to the voluntary HIV testing service.

KEY WORDS: VOLUNTARY HIV TEST/ MEANINGS/PERCEPTIONS/ SOCIAL PRESSURE/PREGNANT WOMEN/ VIETNAM

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