



REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS AMONG REPRODUCTIVE-AGED WOMEN LIVING IN ITALY

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Context: Few studies have examined Italian women's attitudes and behaviors regarding sexual and reproductive health issues. Italy stands out in comparison to other EU countries and the US for unique views and practices regarding reproductive healthcare access, contraception, pregnancy, and sexual health education. However, the role of psychological, clinical, and behavioral factors in broader reproductive health care decision-making among Italian women remains unclear and understudied.

Objective: This study aimed to gather insight into Tuscan women's reproductive and sexual health behaviors and perceived needs.

Methods: Researchers utilized a mixed methods approach, which included semi-structured interviews and a web-based survey. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data collection started in June 2017 and is ongoing, with an expected completion date of August 2017. To date 40 interviews 50 surveys have been collected.

Patient(s): Women aged 18 to 45 years residing in Tuscany, Italy.

Intervention(s): Findings from this study can be used to develop interventions related to contraceptive access, safe genital hair removal, sexual health education, and other reproductive and sexual health issues.

Main Outcome: Tuscan women's experiences with reproductive and sexual health issues, including: contraception, genital hair removal, pregnancy, menstruation, sexual behaviors, and healthcare access.

Measure(s): One-on-one, in-depth qualitative interviews (lasting approximately 60 minutes) and a cross-sectional, web-based survey (lasting approximately 15 minutes).

Result(s): Preliminary findings highlight women's experiences with their first gynecological exam and sexual encounter, managing menstruation, and pregnancy within a country with a declining birthrate.

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Additional insights suggest Tuscan women prefer perceived natural methods (e.g., contraception, feminine hygiene, breastfeeding, birthing) over more medicalized interventions, and struggle to find women's health-related information. Further qualitative and quantitative analyses will be conducted upon data collection cessation.

Conclusions: Findings provide practical recommendations for Italian health professionals to further develop effective reproductive and sexual health messaging and interventions. Results can also be used to compare and contrast women's reproductive and sexual health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors between countries, such as Italy, the EU, and the US.