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# Women's Health, Obstetrics and Female Reproductive System

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## Increasing rural women's preconception healthcare knowledge and self-efficacy: A quasi-experimental pilot study

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**Statement of the Problem:** Preconception healthcare (PCHC) addresses the health of reproductive-aged women and men before pregnancy, recognizing the impact of pre-pregnancy health on birth outcomes and infant mortality. In the United States (U.S.) adverse birth outcomes continue to challenge health professionals and contribute to the high national infant mortality. PCHC is a primary healthcare intervention; however, almost one-half of rural women are not aware and either do not receive PCHC or receive only a few of the PCHC services recommended by the CDC and professional organizations such as the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. The purpose of this study is to determine if an educational program that uses the Health Belief Model as a framework, will increase preconception health knowledge and self-efficacy among rural reproductive-aged women to access PCHC. The aims are to evaluate the effect of an instructional intervention that uses the HBM, on PCHC knowledge and self-efficacy among rural reproductive-aged women. Findings: Post-intervention PCHC knowledge ( $p=0.021$ ), and HBM summary score ( $p=.009$ ) increased in the study group. On follow-up tests only, the study group demonstrated a significant increase in PCHC knowledge ( $p<.001$ ) and in the HBM summary scores ( $p=.015$ ). HBM subscale analysis showed greater risk perception ( $p=0.010$ ), severity ( $p=0.041$ ), self-efficacy ( $p=.015$ ), and cues for action ( $p=.007$ ) in the study group. Conclusion & Significance: providing PCHC education to rural reproductive-aged women increases their knowledge and self-efficacy to access PCHC. PCHC is a preventive and health promotion intervention that can improve women's health and reduce health risks before conception. A planned pregnancy in a healthier woman will result in better birth outcomes and lower infant mortality. This primary healthcare intervention has great potential to improve birth outcomes and child health in at-risk populations.

### Biography

Cristina Lammers is currently working as an associate professor in SDSU College of Nursing, where she teaches nursing undergraduate students and students from different health professions. For the past sixteen years, she has taught public health science courses, developed new women's health courses, and do research that focuses on relevant health issues affecting our communities. Maternal and child health, more specifically preconception healthcare is her main research interest. She has led research work on preconception health care in rural populations, including assessment surveys and implementing women-centered community interventions. A grant proposal submitted July 2017 to NIH-Eunice Shriver Foundation will allow expanding this research. Her goal is to improve the health of women and children, recognizing the impact of early maternal and child health care interventions for improving birth outcomes and infant mortality. Preconception health care is a primary healthcare intervention that can improve birth outcomes and infant mortality and reduce health disparities among vulnerable populations.

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