

Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health
Volume 39, Number 4, December 2007

The Quality of Family Planning Services in the United States: Findings from a Literature Review

By Davida Becker, Michael A. Koenig, Young Mi Kim, Kathleen Cardona and Freya L. Sonenstein

CONTEXT: Family planning services are frequently used and important services for American women, yet little is known about their quality. Service quality has important implications for women's reproductive health. If women do not receive adequate information and tools, and learn appropriate skills, from their providers, they may be hampered in their efforts to control their fertility.

METHODS: A variety of strategies, including database, journal and Internet searches, were used to identify published and unpublished U.S. studies on family planning service quality that came out between 1985 and 2005. Studies were categorized by their focus, and key points of their methodologies and findings were assessed.

RESULTS: Twenty-nine studies were identified, most of which were based on client surveys. Most conceptualized quality as a multidimensional construct, but a uniform definition of quality is lacking, and the domains studied have not been consistent. The available studies focus on four areas: assessments of quality, its correlates, its consequences for client behavior and attitudes, and clients' values and preferences regarding services. Relations between clients and service facility staff have typically been rated favorably, but communication, patient-centeredness and efficiency have been rated more poorly. Service quality varies by characteristics of the facility, provider, client and visit. Research on the consequences of service quality for clients' contraceptive behavior or risk of unintended pregnancy has been very limited and yielded mixed results.

CONCLUSIONS: Studies that assess service quality need stronger designs and greater consistency in measures used so that results are comparable.

Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 2007, 39(4):206–215

[» table of contents](#)

[» search the PSRH archive](#)

[» guidelines for authors](#)

Davida Becker is a doctoral candidate, Michael A. Koenig is associate professor, Kathleen Cardona is assistant scientist and Freya L. Sonenstein is professor, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health; Young Mi Kim is associate scientist, Department of Health, Behavior and Society—all at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore.

DOI:10.1363/3920607

[Full text in PDF](#)

[Full-featured version available to subscribers](#)

related to their online access. Phone: 1 (800) 835-6770 or E-mail: cs-journals@wiley.com.