



Spreading the Safe N' Happy message at Sion Hospital Workshop done on April 28, Mumbai

On Saturday 28th April, we held one of our workshops at Sion Hospital. Usually our workshops are attended by school girls, but this one was for 200 trainee nurses.



Presenting to this audience was a great opportunity for our NGO due to the chain reaction our workshop will have. When these students qualify as nurses they will interact with many girls and women on a daily basis thus they are the perfect platform to share menstrual hygiene information and our open minded approach to periods. It is important for nurses to feel comfortable talking about menstruation and put patients at ease when doing so.

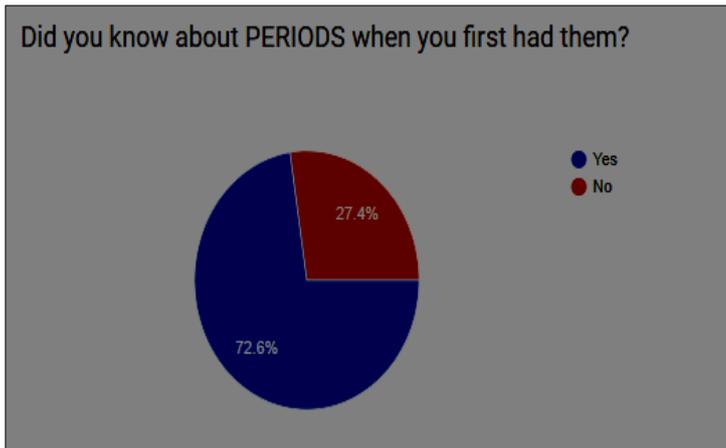
During our workshop at Sion Hospital in Mumbai we had the chance to collect some information through the use of a questionnaire. It was divided in two sections, one was related to what the students knew about menstruation before the workshop and their personal experience, meanwhile in the second part there were questions related to the workshop per se.

We collected a total of 158 responses from students studying at the Nursing School in Sion Hospital, with an age between 18 and 23.

Pre workshop

The first set of questions was related to the feelings and sensations about menarche. The first important information related to periods shows us that the majority of them, almost 73%, already knew about menstruation when they first had them. But this means anyway that almost 30% of the girls didn't have any menstrual education before.





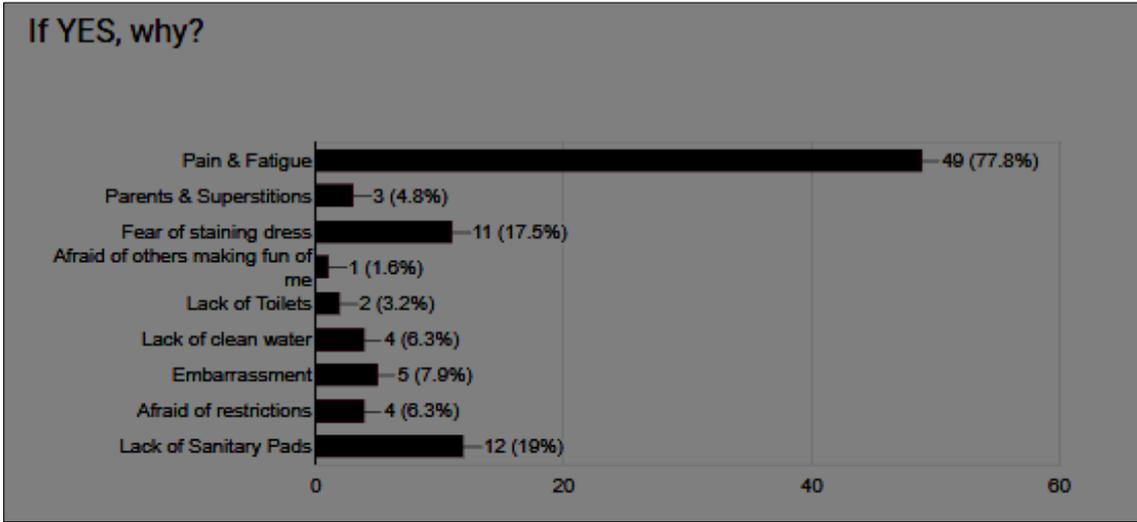
Almost all the girls talked to their mother once they had their first period, just 4 girls said that they didn't talk to anybody. This means that mothers have to be educated on this topic so that they can teach their daughters to be prepared and not scared from all the physical and psychological changes happening during puberty, and to feel confident and don't be shy about menstruation.

Speaking about menarche the majority of them, 49.7%, said it was a shocking or embarrassing experience, while 14% was prepared for it and 39% of them felt like it was a natural process.

When asked if they feel hesitant speaking about this subject 41% of them still said that they do. Now that for the girls is not something new anymore, 75.7% of them feel like menstruation is a normal process, even if still 23.7% think it is fearful and painful. One of the answers recall our attention since one of the girls said that periods are a disease.

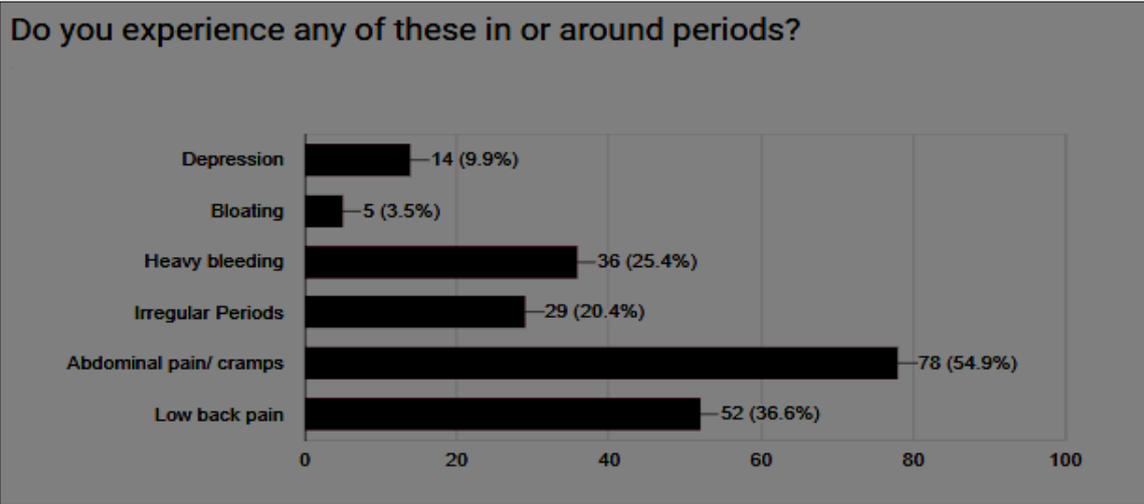
When asked what they think about menstrual blood, 49.3% of the students said it is impure, 4.2% that is filthy or inauspicious. Even if almost 48% of the girls feels that is normal, it is really important to make everyone feel comfortable having periods and to make everyone understands what is happening to your body.

A good result is related to the absenteeism in school because of periods, and it seems that 65% never missed school for this reason, the remaining 35% of the girls did miss school but the majority of them did it because of pain and fatigue. Still, 28.5% of them happened to not go to school because of the lack of sanitary pads or of toilets, or even for lack of clean water. The fear of having stains on the dress kept at home 17.5% of the students interviewed. Other students, even if they represent a small percentage 4.8%, stayed at home because of superstitions, 7.9% felt embarrassed and 6.3% were afraid of restrictions.



More than half of the nursing students doesn't feel shy in buying by herself sanitary pads, even though is still high the percentage of those that do feel shy 29.9%. Almost all of them use normal disposable sanitary pads, just few of them tried tampons, menstrual cups and 3.9% uses cloth pads.

When the girls have been asked if they are aware of the different way to manage menstrual pain, the results shows that 77% answered in a positive way. The most common way comes out being the use of hot fomentation, 44.2%, 31% takes medicine, 24.8% practices yoga and the same percentage said they do exercises to relieve the pain, 14.7% use food and 10.1% also drink tea to soothe the pain.

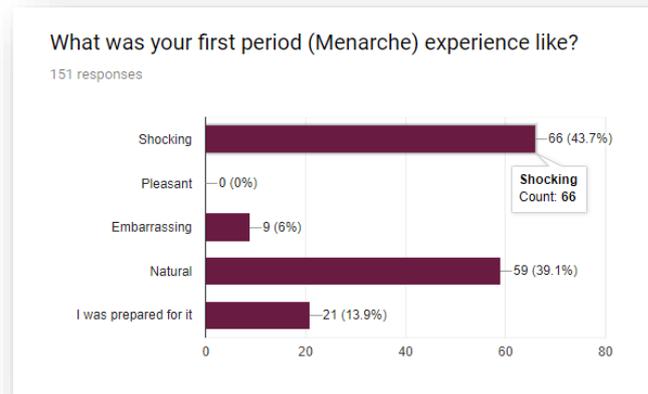


With respect to the pain during or around periods the most frequent seems to be abdominal pain and cramps and low back pain, respectively 54.9% and 36.6%. Furthermore, 25.4% suffers of heavy bleeding, 20.4% experience irregular periods and 3.5% bloating. The girls that feel severe pain represent 22.7%, and the 41.3% of the students gets periods pain mainly in the first day, and 25.9 % of all the students on the first two days. But a more significant symptom is depression, almost 10% of the girls have to deal with it and it can have negative consequences on the girl's relationship and self-esteem. For this is important to know the

reasons why cycle of menstruation causes intense hormonal fluctuation, that can raise vulnerability and lead to a state of depression and anxiety.

The responses show that 16.9% suffers from poly cystic ovarian disorder (PCOD), 3.9% suffers from urinary tract infections (UTI). The most frequent symptoms result being acne, weight gain, itching around vagina and growth of facial hair, respectively 27.3%, 26%, 26% and 5.2% .

More than half of the girls didn't visit a doctor for any problems related to period. Last question of this first section is related to the postponing of menstrual flow for religious or other occasions, and 15,4% said they did.



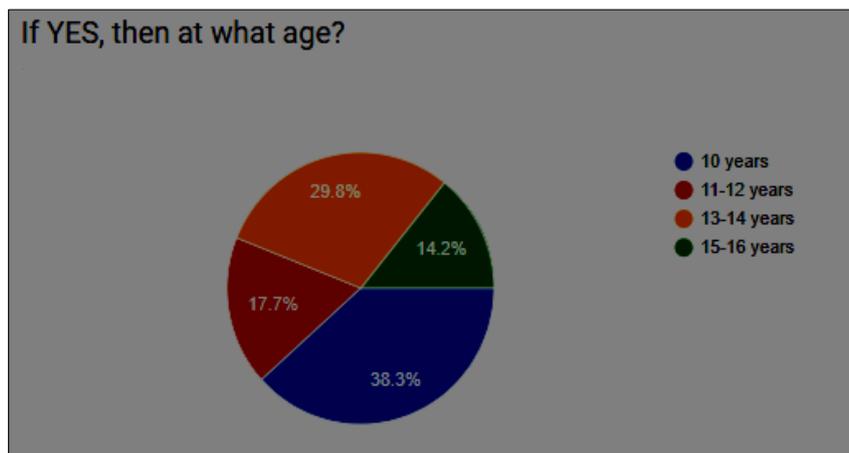
POST WORKSHOP

The girls found the workshop useful, since the majority of them had never attended any similar workshop before.

During our workshop we use to demonstrate some yoga asanas for pain relief and this was the part the girls mostly enjoyed along with the new information related to the different products that can be use for menstrual flow.

Almost all of them think that menstrual education should be compulsory in schools, but the results show different ideas about the range of age in which this should happen. In fact, 14.2% think that the best age to learn about cycle of menstruation would be between 15 and 16 years old and 38% thinks that it should be taught to 10 years old girls.





Another topic almost all of them agreed on is related to boys and men been taught about menstruation as well as women and girls. The more people will be well-informed on the topic the easier will be the eradication of the myth and taboos on this subject, helping women to feel less hesitant to talk about it, and so to manage menstrual hygiene in the healthiest way possible.

As the girls suggested talking freely about periods can make women more confident, happy and efficient. More important it can make women to use always healthy practices during periods.

Girls respond positively after the workshop, saying that they feel more confident now and understand that menstruation represents a natural process.