

Clients' Satisfaction of the Premarital Counseling Service in Bahrain

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Background: In an attempt to reduce the incidence of genetic disease in Bahrain a premarital screening program was introduced in 1985, which included a national campaign to increase the awareness of genetic blood diseases among the population.

In 1992, the premarital counseling service was extended to include all health centers and on the 23rd June 2004, a law has been issued mandating premarital screening and counseling for all individuals wishing to get married.

Objective: The aim of this study is to evaluate the clients' satisfaction from the premarital counseling service after four years of issuing the law.

Setting: Genetic Clinic at Salmaniya Medical Center.

Design: Cross sectional study.

Method: A questionnaire was distributed to the attendants of the genetic clinic (GC) for premarital counseling. Those who received and answered the questionnaire were referred from health centers (HC) after being evaluated and found at risk. The study was conducted from January 2005 to December 2007. SPSS was used to analyze the data.

Result: One thousand five hundred and sixty-six clients answered the questionnaire, 70% of the respondents reported that the service is excellent in general. In the HC, 82% faced no problems in taking an appointment and 89% had no problems during the interview.

At the GC, 91% agreed that there were no significant problems in getting an appointment and 97% had no problems during the consultation. Eight-two percent of the referred couples preferred to have the certificate stamped in the GC.

It took one week for 73.5% of the clients to get an appointment in the HC. Seventy-eight percent got their laboratory results within a week and 86% were seen in the genetic department within one week.

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Conclusion: After almost 4 years of issuing the premarital law in Bahrain, most clients attending the premarital service in GC are satisfied with the level of the service. The delay in getting an appointment in the HC and in getting the laboratory results are major problems the clients are concerned about.