

## **SOCIAL COMMUNICATION ABOUT CONTRACEPTION: A PILOT STUDY**

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In the United States, 50% of pregnancies are unplanned or mistimed. One reason for this is that women are using birth control methods that are not effective at preventing pregnancy, or are not using any birth control method. Women often learn about birth control methods by talking with their friends and family members. Our research team wanted to learn more about how women's friends and family members (also known as their "social network") influence their opinions about birth control methods.

This project had three aims:

Aim 1: To write and test survey questions to be used in a larger, long-term study of women's social networks and birth control use.

Aim 2: To make versions of this survey that can be used on cell phones and on the internet.

Aim 3: To find the best way to reach out to women's friends and family members to get them to join a study about birth control.

For Aim 1, we worked with a consultant on social networks and reviewed other studies that had been done on similar topics to come up with a list of survey questions. To test the questions, we recruited 25 women between ages 18 and 45 from a women's health clinic to take our survey and then discuss their feedback with a research assistant afterwards. Based on their feedback, we made some changes to the survey to make it easier to understand.

For Aim 2, we contacted companies that create online and mobile phone surveys to find out about their pricing and whether they could meet our needs. We were not able to find an option that was affordable and met our survey needs. However, after making some changes to the original survey, we found a company called REDCap that we are using for online surveys in a new study.

For Aim 3, we asked the 25 women who gave feedback on the survey to write down a list of all the women they talk about birth control with. Then we asked them to hand out cards to these women asking them to get in touch with our study staff. None of these women got in touch with our study staff.

We therefore decided to test a different way of reaching out to women's friends and family. We recently started a new study where we give women \$10 for each friend who gets in touch with the study staff. We also had half of the women in the new study hand out information cards asking their friends to call us, while the other half asked their friends if it was OK for study staff to call them. So far, the second approach (study staff calls a woman's friends after they say it's OK to call, and the woman who referred them gets \$10) is working.

Using what we learned from this research, we were able to get funding for a second study that will allow us to test new ways of learning about women's social networks and their effects on birth control use.