Reproductive health in Occupied Palestine: Ethical Considerations

By: Tafeeda Jarbawi
Presentation Outline

Ethics World Committees : (COMEST) World Commission on Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology, (IBC) International Bioethics Committee

Approaches to Reproductive Health: Life cycle, Integral Part to General Health.

Factors affecting women's health in Palestine – Political, Socioeconomic and cultural

Ethical Considerations related to Women Health: Human right based Health Services in Palestine

Recommendations
World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST)

- An advisory body and forum of reflection that was set up by UNESCO in 1998.

- Composed of 18 members among eminent personalities in the fields of science, professional engineering, law, philosophy, culture, religion or politics.

- COMEST is mandated to formulate ethical principles that could provide decision-makers with criteria that extend beyond purely economic considerations.
COMEST observes the following normative actions and principles

“well-being of humanity, the earth and all its species”

- Respect for all life, human and non human
- Respect for biodiversity
- Safeguarding the sustainability of the biosphere
- Principle of environmental justice
- Precautionary principle
- Principle of the earth as global commons
The Hippocratic Oath

Ethical issues can be deduced from the innovative Hippocratic oath for medical scientists, engineers and executives drafted by the Institute for social Innovations.

- I vow to practice my profession with conscience and dignity.
- I will strive to apply my skills only with the utmost respect for the well-being of humanity, the earth and all its species.
- I will not permit considerations of nationality, politics, prejudice or material advancement to intervene between my work and this duty to present and future generations.
**International Bioethics Committee (IBC)**

**IBC** is a body of 36 independent experts that follows progress in the life sciences and its applications in order to ensure respect for human dignity and freedom.

**IBC** was created in 1993. To promote reflection on the ethical and legal issues raised by research in the life sciences and their applications.
Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights

• The promotion of health and social development is a central role of government

• States should take all appropriate legislative measures. Such measures should be supported by action in the spheres of education, training and public information.
Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights

• Health of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition:

  1. Access to quality health care and essential medicines, especially for the health of women and children.
  2. Access to adequate nutrition and water
  3. Improvement of living conditions and the environment
  4. Reduction of poverty and illiteracy
Approaches to Reproductive Health

The presentation will focus on reproductive health in reliance to:

- Holistic Health
- Life Cycle Approach
- Human Right Ethical Approach
- Socioeconomic, political and cultural factors
Women in Palestine: Living in an environment of Human right violations
Factors Affecting Women’s health in Palestine

Political Occupation

Economic Poverty

Sociocultural Gender inequality & Violence
Occupation

- 60 years of continuous war
- 47 years of Israeli military occupation
Occupation

482 settlement in west bank

537,000 settlers in west bank

49.8% of settlers live in Jerusalem

Settlers dump their waste into the Palestinian villages. Monopolize water, nests, electricity. Uproots trees, kill and attack, etc…
At the check point
Crossing a check point in Ramallah
Gates to villages
Checkpoint to Jerusalem
Since 2000:

- 68 pregnant Palestinian women gave birth at Israeli checkpoints
- 34 miscarriages
- Death of 4 women
Daily violation of Human Rights and Dignity
Challenges in Palestine

- Accessibility
- Unemployment
- Poor quality of care
- Apartheid Wall
- Poverty
- Violence
- Poor Nutrition
- Funding restrictions
- Doctor Centered
Selected Indicators for women in Palestine

- Population by gender: 49.2% women (Overall population is 4.4 million)

- Average life expectancy: 74 years

- Poverty among women: 26.2% (overall 25.8%)

- Unemployment females: 31.5% (overall 23.9%)

- Female Participation in labor force: 17.3% (Overall 43.4%)

- Participation in Decision Making (7.8% Legislative council, 11.3% Judges, Editors in Chief 10%)
Selected Indicators for women in Palestine

- 19% Percent of women are married before they are 18 Yrs.
- 20 years Average age at Marriage
- 4.6% Fertility rate
- 23/100,000 Maternal Mortality
Selected Indicators for Women Health in Palestine

20% Chronic diseases (Vs. 16.2% among men)
- 45.7% Blood Pressure (Vs. 44.8% among men)
- 55% Diabetes (Vs. 45% among men)

53% Cancer (Vs. 47% among men)
- 16.2% Breast Cancer
- 10.4% Colon Cancer
- 10.3% Lung Cancer
- 6.1% Leukemia
### % Domestic Violence against women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators (PCBS)</th>
<th>Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economical Violence</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social violence</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual violence</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological violence</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elderly women who were exposed to violence by a household member</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
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Effect of the WAR ON GAZA on Reproductive Health: use of illegal radio active weapons

- 40% increase in miscarriage cases
- 50% increase in neonatal deaths
- Home births increased from 5% to 35%
- Increase in C section surgeries from 15% to 32%
- Increase in premature delivery
- Anemia among pregnant women 35.6%
- Skin cancer
- Epilepsy and deformation of newborn increased by 27%
- Devastating effect on environment, humans and all living
Landfill in GAZA
Health Services in Palestine
Statistical Background

# of hospitals that provide services in the field of gynecology and obstetrics is 16

Capacity 395 Beds (13.2% of the overall hospitals capacity)
Women’s Health Care in Palestine

Legislation
- Incomplete
- Poor implementation

Policies and Strategies
- Weak role of professional bodies and regulatory frameworks.
- Incomplete and inadequate licensing and accreditation systems.
- Weak policy making and implementation

Health Systems
- Fragmented and inconsistent
- High migration of skilled professionals
- Weak Ethical approach
- Weak Monitoring and Supervision

Women Health Rights and Ethics
- Weak Adherence to ethical principles
Women's Health services in Palestine

Poor Skills of health providers

No systematic inquiry process

Limited Training Opportunities

Lack of supervision

Lack of evidence based protocols

Continuous lowering of quality of care

Inadequate Health System

Affects Women’s Health status
Weak Adherence to ethical principles in their practice

Doctor Centered Approach

- No consultation and listening to Women’s needs
- Weak Doctor Patient Relationship (in medication, surgeries, check up, follow up and advise)
- No Holistic Approach

- Abortion
- Postpartum depression
- Infertility treatment
- Cultivation
- Infection
- Hormonal changes
- Menopause
- Early puberty
1. Regulations and Policies

- Establishing a National Bioethics Council/Committee
- Development of strategic plan for bioethics at the national level
- Conducting a data collection survey on existing laws, regulations and procedures that are relevant to bioethics.
- Establishing and instrument to initiate and develop appropriate laws and regulations
- Raising awareness and advocacy to change/initiate policies, regulations and normative actions
2. Health Education

- Improving and developing ethical practices of health care professionals and investigators.
- Developing comprehensive bioethics education programs
- Developing a unified bioethics curriculum in all health disciplines in cooperation with the UNESCO and/or the WHO

3. Society

- Mobilize the civil society institutions including women and youth organizations, research institutes, universities.
- Creating youth fora, networks and observatories to highlight the practices
- Encouraging publications, mobilizing media, and organizing seminars, workshops and conferences.