

CHINA STUDY

Friendly Collaboration And Fruitful Achievement

Some Experiences and Understandings of the Research Work on the Billings Ovulation Method used in Shanghai, China by:

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Introduction

In October 1986, a faculty of experts visited Shanghai China for the first time to give lectures on the **Ovulation Method** in the city as well as in the county of Shanghai municipality. Since that time we organized four Teacher Training Courses in Shanghai, Shenghen and Xian in June 1987, June 1988 and April 1990. Fifty trainees from Shanghai attended the Teacher Training Course and have been retrained in the Advanced Teacher Training Course. Another Teacher Training Course held in Shenghen was attended by fifty trainees who came from more than 10 provinces and municipalities. Also, the Teacher Training Course held in Xian, Shaanxi Province was attended by 200 local students. Most of the trainees were medical

doctors (gynecologists), nurses, midwives and family planning workers. These attendees were recruited from the teaching hospitals of the Medical Universities, MCH Hospitals and Stations, and different levels of the Family Planning Commission.

Under the support of the Shanghai Science and Technology Committee of the local government we carried out a clinical pilot study that gave the expected results. Subsequently, we began to carry out a formal clinical and laboratory study, from June 1988 to May 1990. 688 reproductive aged couples were recruited to use the **Ovulation Method** as their only contraceptive method. Most of them used the method for more than 12 months with a total of 10,175 woman months. The effectiveness rate for avoiding pregnancy was 98.82% Woman Year and the continuation rate was 93.04% Woman Year at the end of the 12 months. These clinical results were very satisfactory and encouraging.

Two topics were studied:

- ✚ The relationship among the cyclic changes of cervical mucus, vaginal smear, and the estrogen and progesterone levels of the women who had used **OM**. (35 women were involved)
- ✚ The relationship between the cyclic changes of cervical

mucus, the vaginal cytograms and the LH levels (67 women were involved, 476,100 vaginal epithelial cells were counted).

The results of these two studies further proved the scientific principle of the Ovulation Method.

In Shanghai, our research project was appraised by the Experts Review Group, in January 1991 and we were awarded in June 1992 the "Prize of Scientific and Technological Progress" of the Shanghai Municipality.

Long-term application of the Ovulation Method

To find out the general situation of the long-term application of OM after the training courses, we made some on-the-spot investigations at several units and held several meetings. Our investigation results were very satisfactory and encouraging. These experiences and understandings have elevated our confidence in the OM. Following are our investigation results and conclusions:

✚ The **Ovulation Method** has a wide adaptability and is accepted by reproductive age couples. Once using the method, the majority of couples are unwilling to stop using it and continue using the method for a long time obtaining good results.

✚ Clinical doctors of many large factories make full use of videotapes, slide shows, wall

instruction charts, booklets and private records, etc. They have developed many good training methods, such as: concentrated training, individual instruction and a combination of the two. In addition to the regular follow-up visits, they review menstrual cycle records and exchange experiences. So the information that is taught is consolidated, deepened and improved gradually.

✚ Recalling the history of carrying out the **Ovulation Method**, Mrs. Zhou, Director of the Public Health Bureau of Chuansha County, told us conclusively:

"At the beginning, we had three problems in carrying out this research item:

- ✓ Can it be carried out among people of low cultural level?
- ✓ Is it possible to do training and instruction in rural areas?
- ✓ Is it possible to persist in long-term application?"

But from clinic inspections of 242 women in the last four years, we got the answer:

- ✓ 66.12% were workers and peasants, and 58.68% had a cultural level of just junior middle school or lower. Among them, only two women failed while learning the method at the beginning. Their usage was less than 3-4 months. Afterwards there was no failure at all.

- ✓ We can carry it out in rural areas by:
 - training by different levels with specially assigned people;
 - forming networks and;
 - making continuous efforts.
- ✓ The **Ovulation Method** can be used persistently over a long period.

Also many investigations of those who had already used the **Ovulation Method** were made. They examined acceptability by the users, reasons and results of discontinuing use, failure when not due to the method itself and evaluations by the users. The result of these investigations showed that most women insisted on continuing use of the method, including those who had failed and had to have an induced abortion. In some units, they tried to persuade their members to accept other contraceptive options but they refused. They insisted on using OM, even though for using the IUD they would receive an official vacation day every month.

A county leader of Chuansha County considered that *family planning* also needs to depend on scientific and technological progress. First, they trained and directed women in the county who were not able to have an IUD inserted or to take contraceptives or injectables. These women were, however, able to use OM. **The rate of induced abortion has been decreasing every year.** In addition, a woman manager not only uses OM

herself to get experience but also advises other women to use it.

- ✓ Through learning, practicing, training and instructing, we have summarized several experiences:

- ❖ The 'early day rules' of OM application must be applied in the early part of the dry period a few days before the fertile phase begins.
- ❖ Regarding 'peak day rules' abstinence must continue until the morning of the fourth day, not earlier.
- ❖ The principles of the scientific basis of OM and its 'rules' must be emphasized and trusting to chance must be avoided.

✚ Most of the women who joined the clinical research insisted on using OM for the past 4-5 years although the research study had ended. They not only use it themselves, but also taught their fellow members, relatives and neighbors to use it.

Some examples:

*A woman was, unfortunately, suffering from ectopic pregnancy after her marriage. After operation, she used OM to avoid the next pregnancy for two years, then she also used OM and succeeded in achieving pregnancy. Four months after delivery of her baby, she used OM again until now (altogether seven years). She felt satisfied that she could actively and freely use OM to avoid and to achieve

pregnancy according to her own need.

*A physician of the factory clinic told me that she was suffering from blood-disease. She had side effects while taking oral contraceptives, so she had to change and had an IUD inserted. She then suffered a hemorrhage which was caused by IUD, however pregnancy was not avoided and induced abortion with heavy bleeding was experienced. Then she changed to using OM for six years and obtained good results.

*Another physician told me: Previously I didn't believe the effectiveness rate of OM could reach more than 90 percent. Through my own practice of OM for six years, I never got pregnant. Now I am full of confidence that OM is not only safe and natural but also scientific and effective. Moreover, there is no mental burden, no misgivings at all.

*A lady with a double uterus has tried many contraceptives and devices, but all failed. As a result, she has had five induced abortions. She has now used OM for five years and has not become pregnant. Another lady with post-partum anemia could not use an IUD because of the profuse bleeding it causes. She failed when using a condom and experienced massive hemorrhage during an induced abortion. She and her husband had no choice but to practice complete abstinence. After she learned OM, her husband was very pleased and

they returned to a normal marital life. They have been using OM now for more than four years.

In China, we found that couples with a high education level have greater misgivings about using artificial methods (IUD, OC, etc.). They are eager to understand human reproductive physiology in order to use a natural method. The faculty of Beijing University recently requested that a training course on the Ovulation Method be organized for them.

Expansion of the Ovulation Method in China

In order to accelerate the popular use of the OM in China to reach the goal of fertility regulation and to protect the reproductive health of women, the next step of our plan is as follows:

- ✚ Establish a **NFP** training Center in An-Hui Province. The trainees will be from each province and municipality in China.
- ✚ Continue to strengthen the existing **NFP** teaching and training program in Shanghai.

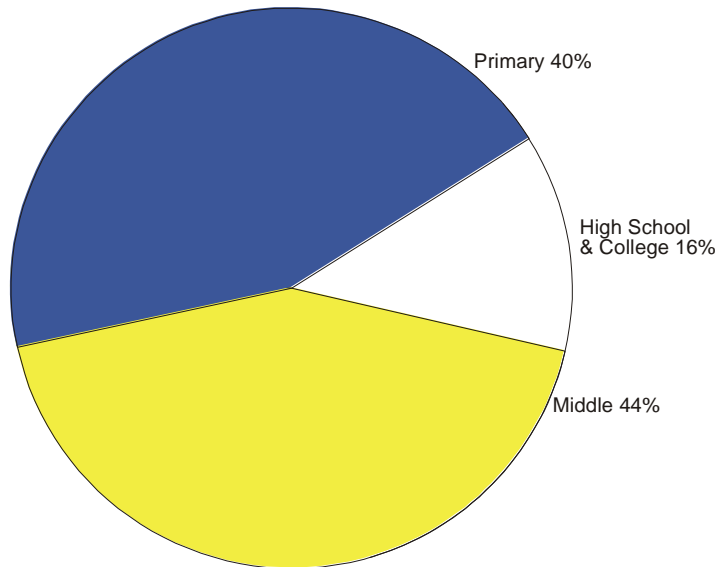
Following is our preliminary plan for Shanghai:

- ✚ Visit those who have insisted on using OM until now, to solidify our achievements, to find out the remaining problems and to sum up our new experiences so that OM can be spread more easily.

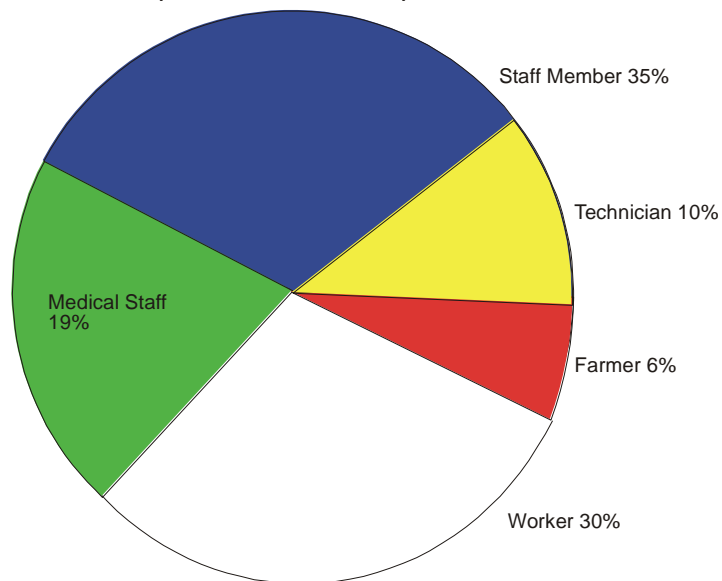
- ✚ By means of the Society of Family Planning Science, hold OM academic activities for summing up experiences and extending influences to take further steps to spread OM. At the same time, to plan to set up an OM subdivision under the Society and through activating at regular intervals, strengthening mutual connections and interchanges, consulting, inquiring and discussing will raise the standard of OM to a new level.
- ✚ Attempt to find out the situation of teachers already trained, to gather information, to summarize experiences so as to reach the aim of solidifying, developing and spreading OM.
- ✚ Gain the support of State Family Planning Commission and Public Health Ministry to form a lecture group and send them to other provinces and municipalities to hold OM training courses. This will be one of the comprehensive measures for speeding up the nationwide spread.
- ✚ Conduct, at the request of the faculties of Beijing University and Shanghai University and Middle School, extensive courses that will enable the influential teachers to learn for themselves this valuable knowledge and to teach it to their students.

Statistics from the Family of the Americas China Study of May, 1990

Education of 688 Couples

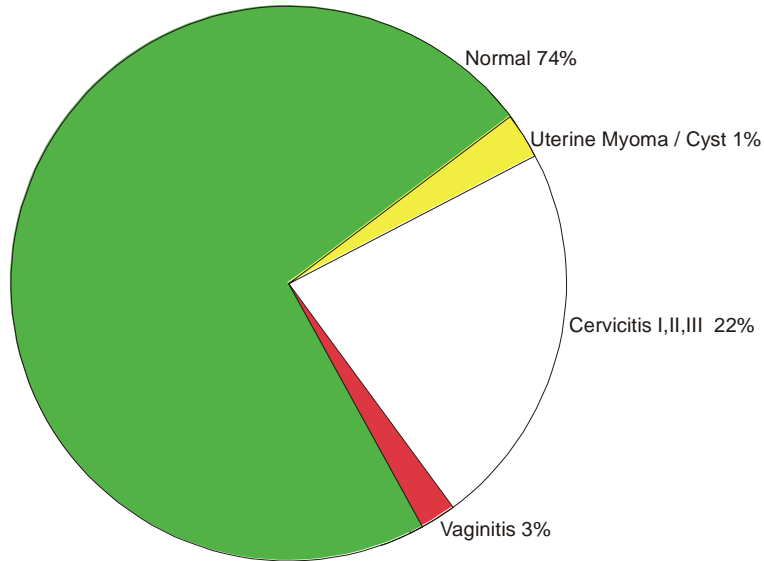


Occupations of 688 Couples

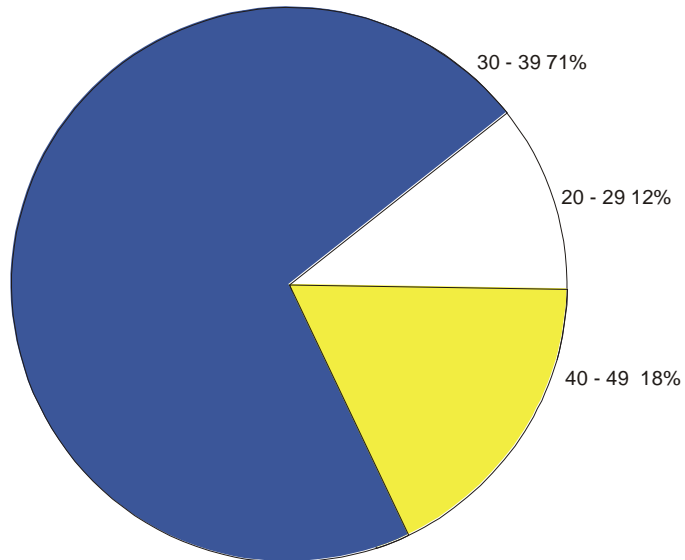


Statistics from the Family of the Americas China Study of May, 1990

Gynecological Examination Findings

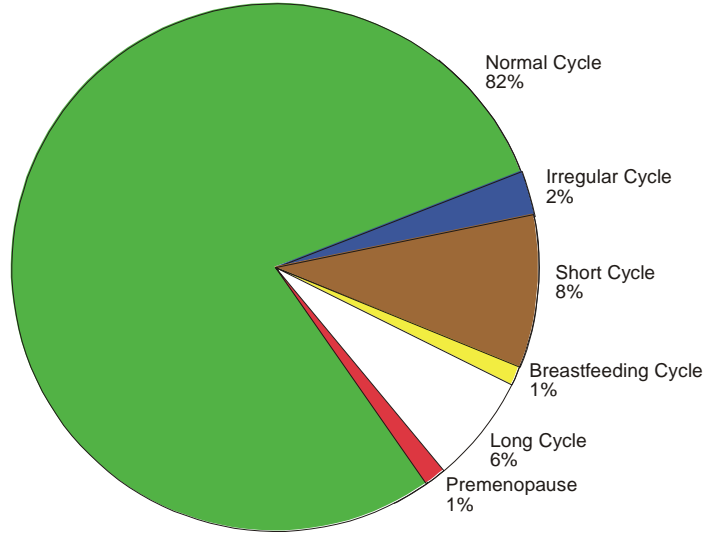


Age of 688 Couples

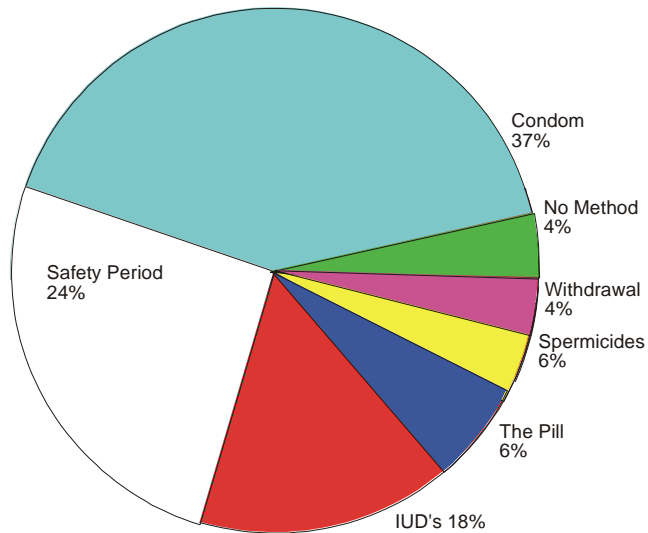


Statistics from the Family of the Americas China Study of May, 1990

Types of Menstrual Patterns of 688 Couples

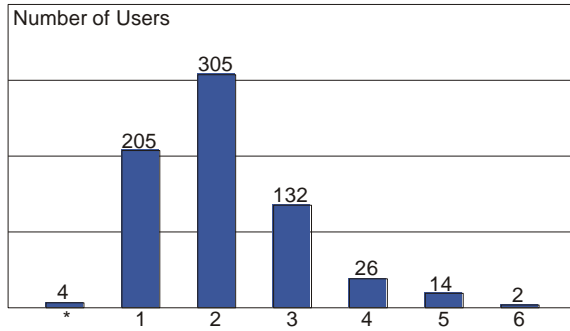


Contraceptive Methods Used Before Study



Statistics from the Family of the Americas China Study of May, 1990

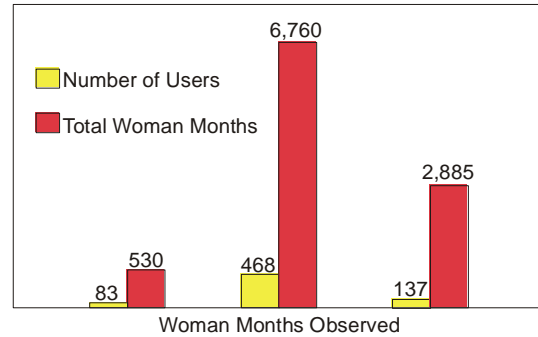
Teaching Time Needed For 688 Couples
To Understand The Ovulation Method



Number of Cycles

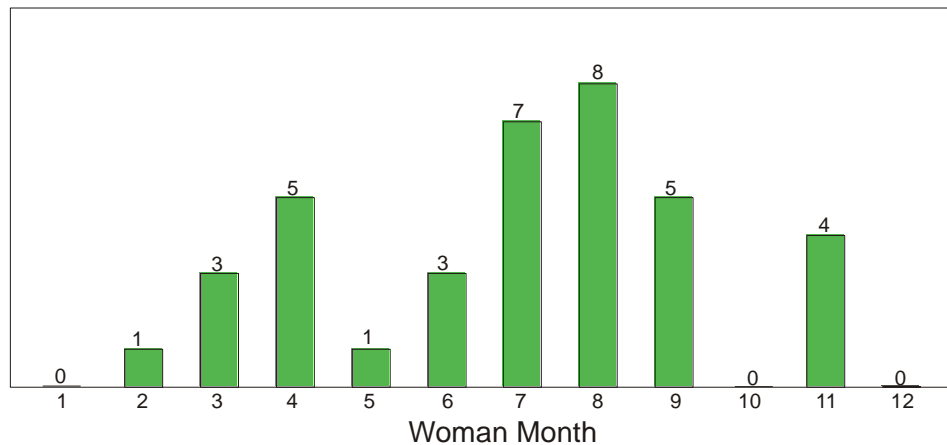
*Got pregnant before understanding O.M.

Amount of Women Months Observed
688 Users 10,175 Woman Months



Woman Months Observed

Unplanned Pregnancies

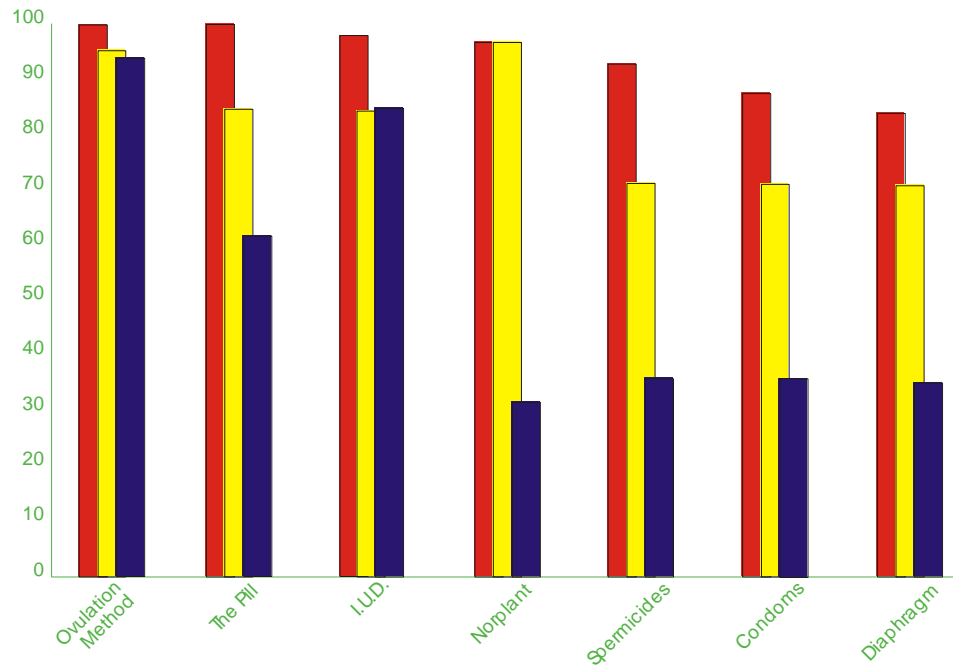


Woman Month

37 pregnancies occurred, giving a pregnancy rate of 4.36/100 Woman Year (WY). It is important to distinguish between pregnancies which result from user-failure and method failure. In this study, the method related pregnancy rate (i.e. couples who abstained on the proscribed fertile days) was 1.18 pregnancies / 100 Woman Year (10 Users), the majority of pregnancies resulted from user failure: the rate of pregnancy resulting from "conscious departure from the rules due to an inability to maintain abstinence" was 0.71 pregnancies / 100 Woman Year (6 users); in addition, 2.12 pregnancies / 100 Woman Year occurred (18) users because of inaccurate application of the method i.e. The subjects did not fully understand the method or its applications (4 users) or the couples had experienced difficulty in following the rules because of continuous mucus discharge (4 users), illness (2users) or other circumstances such as a trip, too busy etc. (8 users) that made it difficult for the subjects to observe or chart the mucus; and 0.35 pregnancies / 100 woman Year (3 users) could not satisfactorily be classified.

A Comparison of Artificial Methods Of Birth Control and The Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning

(in Shanghai province, China, June 1988 - May 1990*)



Effectiveness Rates							
	Natural	Artificial *					
	Ovulation Method	The Pill	IUD	Norplant	Spermicides	Condoms	Diaphragm
● Method Effectiveness	98.82 %	99 %	97 %	95 %	90 %	85 %	82.5 %
● User Effectiveness	95 %	85 %	81 %	95 %	70 %	70 %	70 %
● Continuation Rate	93.04 %	60 %	81.4 %	30 %	35 %	35 %	35 %

Source: Dr. Zhang D.-W. and Xu J.-X.: "The effectiveness of the Ovulation Method used by 688 couples in Shanghai", *Reproduction and Contraception*, June 1993, vol. 13, no. 3 pp. 194-200.
*Personal Communication: Dr. Zhang De-Wei.