

Awareness of rural women of punjab regarding pollution causing and environmentally safe food and cooking practices

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Rural households in India are more prone to household pollution as apart from routine pollutants generated in houses especially in kitchens. The present study was conducted to find out the awareness regarding pollution causing and environmentally safe cooking practices in three regions of Punjab i.e. Majha, Malwa and Doaba. For this purpose, 240 rural women of district Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana were selected. Data were collected through interview schedule. The study revealed that large majority of women (90%) were aware that oils fumes released during process of frying pollutes air. Only one third respondents were aware that use of solar cooker is eco friendly. About 78 per cent of women were not aware that use of heavy utensils is responsible for higher consumption of fuels which leads to air pollution. About fifty per cent of respondent had medium and high level of awareness regarding food and cooking practices. Age, education, mass media exposure, family education and family income were significantly correlated with level of awareness. Although the women had awareness about pollution causing practices but they did not know the alternatives and management strategies to control pollution in kitchen. There is need to educate rural women regarding management of safe food-cooking practices through different interventions.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Awareness, Food and cooking practices, Pollution

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The degradation of environment with respect to water, air and soil is increasing day by day, not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas. There has been an increasing global concern over the impact of environmental pollution on public health. Many of the diseases facing mankind are reported to occur due to prolonged exposure to polluted air, water and soil. A common man observes environmental pollution in the form of changing climate, ozone depletion, rising in sea level, acid rain and polluted air in the cities but he is little aware of the fact that household pollution is as important as pollution of the outside environment (Songsere and Granahan 1993). Rural households in India are more prone to household pollution, especially in kitchens. The traditional cooking practices in rural household kitchens generate a mixture of toxic gases, which affect the inhabitants especially the women who spend much time in kitchen. In

India, mainly solid and biomass fuels like coal, dung, charcoal, wood or crop residues are main sources of fuel. Solid fuels produce more pollutants than liquid ones. Apart from this the traditional cooking practices performed by rural women may produce certain harmful gases in kitchens that affect the health of rural women. Hence the present study was an attempt to find out the awareness of rural women regarding pollution causing and environmentally safe food and cooking practices with following objectives:

- To identify the pollution causing and environmentally safe food and cooking practices.
- To study the awareness of rural women regarding pollution causing and environmentally safe food and cooking practices.
- To study the relationship between socio-personal profile and level of awareness.