

INTRODUCTION

Reproductive care is defined as the constellation of methods, techniques, and service that contribute to reproductive health and wellbeing by preventing and solving reproductive health problems. It also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations, and not merely counseling and sexually transmitted infections. The goals of reproductive health is to ensure healthy sexual development and maturation, and to have the capacity for equitable and responsible relationships, and sexual fulfillment, avoid illness, disease, and disability related to sexuality and reproduction, receive appropriate care when needed, and to be free from violence and other harmful practices related to sexuality and reproduction *WHO,(2007)*. It implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sexual life, and that they have the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so (*ICPD, 1994*).

Self-care has been defined as a range of activities performed by individuals to prevent illness, promote wellbeing, and meet basic health needs. They encompass personal and environmental hygiene, nutrition, recreation needs, as well as dealing with minor illness, which are derived from Orem's theory, and interpersonal communication and education derived from Pender's model (*Makhubela, 2002*).

The self-care concept was present before medical specialization, and easy accessibility to medical services. In early health care system, people utilized self-assessment, self-diagnosis, and self-treatment both to prevent and solve health care problems. The world health organization (WHO) has asserted that self-care emerges as a core theme that emerges from the concept of primary health care, with a strong nursing focus (*Hessein, 2001*).

The Theory of self-care is based on a patient's ability to perform self-care activities. Self-care learned behavior, with deliberate action responding to need, includes activities an individual performs to maintain health **White, (2005)**. Health promotion refers to performance of activities and practices to prevent disease and enhance health. It is a process of fostering awareness, influencing attitudes, and identifying alternatives so that an individual can make informed lifestyle choices to help achieve or maintain optimal levels of physical, social, mental and emotional well-being. It targets personal habits, lifestyles, and environment to reduce risks and to enhance health, thus strengthening the person's capacity to withstand physical and emotional stress (**Orleans, 1999**).

The goal of self-care is to empower clients and their families. Health education, as an on-going process, can help the clients gain knowledge about their specific disease, and improve their self-care skills. It helps them move towards being as independent as possible, and this is one of the nursing ultimate goals (**Oesley, 2003**).

Health promotion is about keeping healthy, having a healthy lifestyle, and preventing illness. It is of particular importance to midwives who promote health rather than manage disease and ill health. Although the midwife has always had a role in public health, there is now an explicit need for the profession to direct its attention to teenage pregnancy, smoking cessation, drug awareness, and domestic violence (**WHO, 2005**).

Nurses are responsible for initiating, updating and reinforcing pregnant women's learning. They must also design strategies that will sustain necessary motivation for pregnant women to maintain maximum quality of self-management throughout their lives **Larsen et al., (2001)**. Hence, nurses can assume a central role in promotion of pregnant reproductive health **Hogarth, (1991)**. This can be achieved through health education and counseling regarding reproductive health, at school, family, and community levels. Through teaching

women self-care activities, nurses can promote and protect pregnant women's reproductive health and enhance their decision-making in the area of sexuality and reproduction, and thus help to decrease maternal mortality and morbidity (*Freedman, 1993*).

Health promotion and the fostering of self-care are central components of nurses' role. Nurses can exert a strong influence as role models, teachers, and advocates for better health. This is true whether the nurse works in a hospital or a clinic, or in the broader community as a nurse practitioner, midwife, school nurse, occupational health nurse, or consultant to private or public agencies. To perform their roles, nurses need to make full use of existing knowledge and technology for health promotion (*Lindeman and McCathie, 1999*).