Abstract

Background: El Salvador is a small Central American country, rapidly transitioning to national healthcare, under a policy titled *Contruyendo la Esperanza* (Constructing Hope). The goal of this policy is to provide all Salvadorans with access to health care services, including contraception. The purpose of this study, conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Health, was to evaluate access to modern contraceptive methods in the municipalities of North Morazán. Research was based in the Perquín Clinic and study dates were January 07 - March 10, 2011.

Methods: There are eleven clinics and five pharmacies within the eight municipalities of North Morazán. All these were visited and face-to-face interviews were conducted with various parties, including medical personnel and proprietors. When and where a *ProFamilia* promoter was located, she was interviewed as well. This required patience, tenacity and much shoe-leather epidemiology, in an effort to obtain accurate information concerning all available contraceptive needs and options.

Results: Contraceptive services varied widely between communities, with some clinics and pharmacies providing multiple options, and others very few. Those communities with *ProFamilia* promoters were generally better supplied with contraceptive products than areas without a promoter.

Conclusion: Access to contraceptives in the urban area of Perquín is excellent, with Perquín Clinic operating 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Other communities have limited hours, with no evening, night, nor weekend services in local clinics. Several communities have neither pharmacy nor *ProFamilia* promoter. Those who live in remote areas have few options and multiple barriers to accessing contraceptives. Barriers include transportation costs, infrastructure limitations, and lack of supplies.