

LEUCORRHOEA, A COMMON HEALTH RELATED PROBLEM IN FEMALES OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE GROUP-A HEALTH SURVEY OF RURAL POPULATION

R. Kundu¹, S. Shukla¹, S. Shaikh¹, V. Dharne¹, V. Jodgekar¹

Motiwala Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital, Nashik Maharashtra India

ABSTRACT

Leucorrhoea is the commonest gynecological health problem encountered in clinical practice and is often neglected by the women. A health survey was conducted by Research panel D of Motiwala Homoeopathic Medical College and Hospital in four rural areas of Nashik District to find out the incidence of leucorrhoea among rural population. The information regarding hygienic health practices adopted by the women was collected by the health related questionnaires. The women were segregated as having physiological leucorrhoea or pathological leucorrhoea based on the symptoms and clinical examination. Those found to have the physiological complaints were promoted to adopt good hygienic practice and those with the complaints of having pathological leucorrhoea were prescribed homoeopathic medicine as per the law of similia.

INTRODUCTION

Leucorrhoea is one of the commonest clinical manifestations of gynecological health problems. It is characterized by painless white discharge per vaginum and is a symptom of many underlying diseases including cancerous affections of genital tract. The aetiology includes excessive coitus, abortions, non cleanliness, improper diet, constipation besides cervical erosion and PID etc.¹ It occurs in 1-14% of all the women in the reproductive age group and is responsible for 50-10 million OPD visits per year through out the world.² At many instances it is a reason for distress and women encountering the problem does not seek medical advice out of embarrassment. In rural population lack of awareness about genital hygiene especially menstrual hygiene, dietary deficiency and negligence to seek medical care are some of the commonest causes which contribute to the gynecological health problems. Menstrual hygiene, a very important risk factor for reproductive tract infections, is a vital aspect of health education for females of reproductive age group³.

The present study was conducted in order to find the incidence of leucorrhoea in rural areas of Nashik District and to promote the genital hygiene in females of reproductive age group. The study was conducted by the Research panel "D" of Motiwala Homoeopathic medical College, Nashik.

Materials and Methods :

The Research Panel "D" is comprised by the Professors from the Department of Gynecology, Community medicine, Physiology and NSS. A mobile health camp was conducted in four villages of Nashik District by the Panel D during the period from July 2011 to July 2012. Females of age 15 years or above were subjected for screening. Health assessment questionnaire was formulated to assess the women's health in general and genital hygiene in particular. Each female complaining of leucorrhoea was subjected to investigate the hemoglobin percentage to assess the nutritional status. The hemoglobin percentage was investigated by the Sahli's method. Beside the history clinical examination was performed including per speculum examination.

An Acetic acid test was performed to detect any cancerous or precancerous affection of the genital tract. Those diagnosed as physiological leucorrhoea were provided with the comprehensive health and hygiene information. Women diagnosed as leucorrhoea as a result of pathological origin were prescribed homoeopathic medicines based on the law of similia.

Excessive foul smelling vaginal discharge causing distress, itching, burning and soreness of the external genitalia associated with signs of urethritis (Burning micturation with increased frequency) and causing dyspareunia were considered as of pathological origine. The diagnosis was confirmed by the per vaginal examination by observing the thick, white curdy discharge (Candidial infection) or greenish, frothy discharge (Mixed infection) on per speculum examination. *Candida albicans* is the commonest organism responsible to cause vaginitis. The microscopical examination of the vaginal

discharge was not carried out to find out the causative organism as the aim of the study was to find out the incidence of leucorrhoea among the rural population.

Absence of odour, itching, burning and soreness, signs of urethritis and mid cycle discharge (i.e during the period of ovulation) were considered to be physiological. Poor genital hygiene, nutrition and anemia found associated with the complaint of leucorrhoea were corrected by educating females regarding the same.

Table 1 : Health Assessment Questionnaire :

A : General Questions

1. Do you feel tired or fatigued ?
2. Do you get short of breath?
3. What is your food intake? Veg/ non veg (how often)?
4. Do you experience a rapid heartbeat ?
5. Is your menstrual cycle irregular?
6. Are you suffering from any chronic disease (PID/ other chronic illness)?
7. Are you taking any vitamin or nutritional supplements?
8. Do you take your meal at regular time?
9. How often do you eat fruits and vegetable?
10. Do you take bath every day?
11. Do you use clean clothes daily?
12. What do you use during menses? Cloth/sanitary pads?
13. How frequently you change the sanitary pads?
14. How often you shave your pubic hair?
15. Do you experience pain during coition.

B. Physical Examination To Assess The General Health Status:

1. Conjunctiva -pale/normal?
2. Tongue -fissured, coated, bald?
3. Nails-pink/koilonachia/serrated?
4. Mid arm circumference?

Study outcome :

Eight hundred and sixtyone females of fertile age group (15-50yrs) across four villages were screened. Two hundred and ninety four females(34.14%) presented with the complaint of leucorrhoea. Two hundred and two (68.70%) were classified as having physiological leucorrhoea where as ninety two (31.29%) were classified as having pathological leucorrhoea once the assessment is being done as per the health questionnaire and per speculum examination.

Out of 294 females complaining leucorrhoea (275 married and 19 unmarried),143 (49.31%) females diagnosed as having anaemia on clinical examination suggesting increased susceptibility of anaemic females to infections. 54.82% females belonged to the age group between 20years-30 years which indicate the prevalence of leucorrhoea more during the period of sexual activity.30.68% females belonged to the age group between 20years to 30 years. Where as the prevalence was found less among the females having age below 20 years (6.89%) and above 40 years(7.58%).

On assessment 157 females (53.40%) were found to have poor hygienic condition during menses. Where as 137(47.24%) females were found following good menstrual hygiene. Thus good hygienic practice is associated with less frequent infections causing leucorrhoea.

Education of the community :

The females who were found to have leucorrhoea during mid cycle period, as a result of poor nutritional status or poor menstrual hygienic condition were encouraged to adopt good hygienic practices like using sanitary pads and shaving the

pubic hair at regular interval and improve the nutritional status with the use of vegetables and fruits. Those diagnosed as pathological leucorrhoea (31.29%) were prescribed homoeopathic medicine as per the law of similia. These females were assessed at one month of interval to investigate the effectiveness of homoeopathic medicines in cases of leucorrhoea.

DISCUSSION:

The present survey was carried out by conducting health check up camps at the rural area on mobile health visits. The simple health related questionnaires were formulated to assess the nutritional status and find out the incidence of leucorrhoea among the rural population. The investigation of hemoglobin estimation was carried out by the simple sahli's technique, advanced techniques and other procedures like culture of the sample were not carried out due to limited resources. This health survey only gave the idea about incidence of leucorrhoea among rural population and differentiation between pathological and physiological leucorrhoea was facilitated and confirmed by clinical examination. The survey provided females to have better understanding of hygiene in general and genital hygiene in particular. Also those suffering from pathological leucorrhoea were provided with homoeopathic medicines, which lead the scope to investigate the efficacy of homoeopathic medicines in gynecological complaints.

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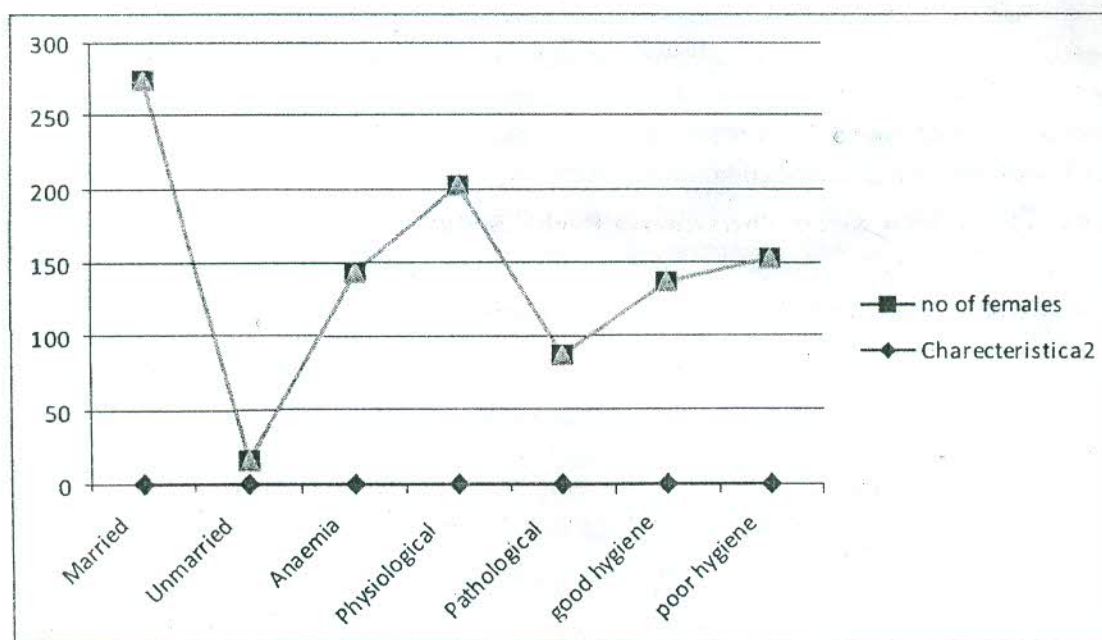


Fig 1. DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF CHARECTERSTICS.

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