Family, educational and sexual characteristics of pregnant women with vaginismus in Tunisia

M. Hdiji, Y. Zgueb, U. Ouali, S. Hechmi, J. Hamdoun, F. Nacef
Razi Hospital, "A" Psychiatric Department, La Manouba, Tunisia

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Factors such as religious or conservative attitudes, lack of sex education, sexual trauma and relational factors may be variables that may enter the etiopathogenesis of vaginismus.

Vaginismus is a feminine sexual dysfunction that makes impossible any intercourse with penetration and whose exact origin is unknown, but which is compatible with pregnancy. There has been little empirically sound research examining the psychological and social factors associated with vaginismus. However, several relational and educational factors are probably part of his etiopathogeny.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a descriptive, prospective and longitudinal study that has been spread over eight months, from November 2017 to June 2018, including 40 pregnant women suffering from vaginismus who consulted the emergency department of the Maternity and Neonatology Center of Tunis. These women were followed and answered a pre-established questionnaire. The psychiatric history as well as epidemiological and clinical data were collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- No women (0%) reported having consented sex before marriage.
- Characteristics of the family, educational and sexual context of the women are presented in the figure 1

REFERENCES

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- [2] Muammar T, McWalter P, Alkhenizan A, Shoukri M, Gabr A, Bin AA. Management of vaginal penetration phobia in Arab women: a retrospective study. *Ann Saudi Med*. 2015;35(2):120-6
- [3] Karroui R. Mariage non consommé et vaginisme: à propos de trois cas cliniques. *Pan Afr Med J*. 2017;27:60

(1): *Tasfih* is a North African tradition whose purpose is to protect the virginity of the girl. Some authors consider it as a sexual trauma in children.

Figure 1: Family, educational and sexual characteristics of women with vaginismus

- Other postulated factors that may be involved in the etiology of vaginismus include: negative parenting opinions about sexuality; negative sexual attitudes; maladjustment of the relationship (including sexual dysfunction of the partner). Thus, it has been reported in the literature that early negative sexual experiences may play a role in the etiology of vaginismus [1].
- Lack of sex education is often associated in women with vaginismus with defective and distorted sexual knowledge. Their sexual learning is linked to an anxiety-provoking speech, marked by the fear of the first experience of deflowering. This is especially evident in non-Western and conservative societies, where lack of sex education contributes to primary vaginismus and fear of pain associated with penetration [2].
- The family context of a woman with vaginismus may be particular according to several authors, marked by authoritarian and repressive parents, a dominant and threatening father, and a mother who considers sexual intercourse as an obligation [3].

CONCLUSIONS

Vaginismus could therefore be associated with trauma and sexual abuse, strict or rigid sexual or religious education, misinformation about sexuality and ignorance of the body. An approach focused on early sex education in Tunisia or more generally in non-Western countries could significantly reduce cases of vaginismus in these countries.