Letters to the Editor


Accepted for publication 27 September 1993.

Screening for genital Chlamydia trachomatis infection in female patients

Chlamydia trachomatis is a major sexually transmitted pathogen with consequent serious morbidity such as pelvic inflammatory disease, tubal occlusion, and infertility in women. The prevalence varies in different parts of the world.1,2

The usual site chosen to screen for this pathogen is the cervix.3,4 In our clinic, the urethra and the cervix are also tested. We report the findings from our Department of Genitourinary Medicine in Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, United Kingdom.

Between the period of 1 January 1991 and 31 December 1991, 1461 women were screened (for sexually transmitted diseases). The ELISA method (Chlamydiyazyme) was used in screening for Chlamydia trachomatis, while Gram stain and culture were used for the detection of gonorrhoea.

The results in the table show that 116 patients were positive for Chlamydia trachomatis, 22 were positive for N gonorrhoea while five patients had both conditions. Among the 11 patients with only urethral Chlamydia trachomatis eight (72%) were asymptomatic.

Infection of the female urethra by Chlamydia trachomatis has been previously reported.5,6 The female urethra is about 4 cm long and various ducts open into its lumen. Of particular importance are the ducts of Skene glands and ducts which are lined by columnar epithelium.

The positive yield of Chlamydia trachomatis from the urethra alone in our study was 9-5%.

The implications of this result are threefold. First, colonisation of the female urethra by Chlamydia trachomatis may contribute to some patients being diagnosed with female urethral syndrome. In this condition, the patient has increased frequency of micturition, dysuria, but no significant bacteriuria. It is advisable to exclude Chlamydia trachomatis from the urethra of such patients. Secondly, the urethra may serve as a reservoir of infection despite a negative result from the cervix. The infection may subsequently be transmitted to the male partner. Thirdly, failure to screen the urethra may be responsible for some patients whose symptoms persist, despite negative results.

We recommend that the urethra be screened for Chlamydia trachomatis.

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2 Winter L, Goldstein S. Prevalence and epidemiologic correlates of Chlamydia trachomatis in rural and urban populations. Sexually Transmitted Disease 1990;17:30-6.


Accepted for publication 12 October 1993

HIV seroprevalence among eunuchs

Eunuchs (hijras) and their existence is well described in ancient Indian texts.1 In India, hijras are seen as a “third gender” role which is neither male nor female but contains elements of both. He is an intersexed impotent man