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IN THE ABSENCE OF BLEEDING, IS A SPECULUM EXAM NECESSARY FOR PESSARY CARE

Hypothesis / aims of study

To determine the probability of identifying a vaginal ulcer in a woman presenting for pessary care in the absence of a history of vaginal bleeding.

Study design, materials and methods

A retrospective chart review of women presenting for routine pessary care between May 2002 and October 2004 at a single practitioner's clinic was undertaken. All women were questioned regarding vaginal bleeding as a part of the visit assessment with the response documented. The presence of vaginal bleeding and the prevalence of vaginal ulcerations were identified in the cohort. Demographic data was analysed descriptively and outcome data was managed using statistical analysis garnered from a two by two table.

Results

Of the 69 charts reviewed, 51 patients fit the criteria for routine pessary care. These women presented for 261 visits during the study period. The patients had a mean age of 73 years (range; 47-94). A total of 19 erosions were visualized. Fifteen (78.9%) of the patients with erosions gave a history of vaginal bleeding while 4 (21.1%) had erosions identified in the absence of a history of recent bleeding. The resultant negative predictive value for the absence of an ulcer in the absence of a history of vaginal bleeding was 0.98. The number of speculum exams needed to detect a vaginal ulcer in the absence of a recent history of vaginal bleeding was calculated at 84.

Interpretation of results

In order to detect one ulcer, in women using a vaginal pessary, in the absence of a history of recent vaginal bleeding, 84 speculum exams would have to be performed.

Concluding message

The likelihood of identifying a vaginal ulcer in a woman presenting for pessary care, in the absence of a history of vaginal bleeding is small. In order to detect one ulcer with a negative history of vaginal bleeding, 84 speculum exams would have to be performed. Without a history of recent bleeding, a speculum exam need not be a routine part of pessary care.