

Report for Waikato Medical Research Foundation June 2014

Review of erosive vulvovaginal lichen planus: Clinical presentation and impact on quality of life

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Project status

This project is now completed.

Major findings

This project had 2 main parts (abstracts outlining findings below):

- Clinical and histological features of erosive vulvovaginal lichen planus (EVLP)
- Impact of EVLP on quality of life

Clinical and histological features of erosive vulvovaginal lichen planus

Introduction

Erosive vulvovaginal lichen planus (EVLP) is a chronic, painful dermatosis affecting mucocutaneous sites. Clinicopathological diagnostic criteria have been described on the basis of expert consensus. The aim of this study was to review the presentation of EVLP, particularly assessing the frequency of suggested diagnostic criteria.

Methods

Clinical signs, symptoms and histological features of women with a clinical diagnosis of EVLP were identified from clinical records and photographs.

Results

Seventy-two women were included with an average age of 67 years. Pain and/or burning were documented in 66/72 cases (92%) and itch in 36 cases (50%). Clinical images showed well-demarcated red shiny areas or erosions at the vaginal introitus (96%), scarring with loss of normal architecture (88%) and hyperkeratotic border and/or Wickham striae (46%). Twenty-six women had mucosal disease at another site (36%) and 24 had vaginal involvement (33%). Vulval histology was available for 45/72 cases (63%). The most prevalent histological finding was a band of inflammation with predominant lymphocytes (35/72, 49%). Overall, 96% of cases had at least 3 of 9 suggested diagnostic criteria.

Conclusion

The most frequent findings in women with EVLP were symptoms of pain or burning, well-demarcated red shiny areas or erosions at the introitus and scarring with loss of architecture. Our findings support the recently described diagnostic criteria for EVLP.

Quality of life and sexual function in women with vulval dermatoses

Introduction

Vulval dermatoses are often chronic and uncomfortable. The aim of this study was to evaluate quality of life and sexual function in women attending the vulval dermatology clinic.

Methods

Women with vulval dermatoses were invited to complete a survey including the Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI), Hospital Depression and Anxiety Scale (HADS), Female Sexual Distress Scale (FSDS) and Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI). Patient characteristics including age, diagnosis and current treatment were recorded.

Results

Ninety-eight women participated from March 2013 to March 2014; average age 64 years (range 18-88). 57% of women had a current sexual partner. The most common diagnosis was lichen sclerosus (52/98) followed by erosive vulvovaginal lichen planus (23) and vulval dermatitis (12). Overall, 32/98 women (33%) reported at least moderate effect on quality of life on the DLQI. A larger proportion of women with lichen sclerosus reported little impact on quality of life compared with lichen planus and dermatitis groups ($p=0.006$). Scores on the HADS suggested depression in 12% and anxiety in 14%. 60% of women who completed the FSDS scored ≥ 11 suggesting sexual distress. In those who completed all sections of the survey ($n=61$) DLQI was positively correlated with HADS ($p=0.03$), FSDS ($p<0.01$) and FSFI ($p=0.02$).

Conclusion

Over half of women attending the vulval dermatology clinic reported sexual distress. Quality of life was relatively better in women with lichen sclerosus compared with lichen planus and dermatitis. There were positive correlations between the DLQI, HADS, FSDS and FSFI.

Allocation of funding

The majority of funding has been used for investigator salary. Smaller allocations have been used for photocopying, printing and access to published articles.

Presentations and publications

Australasian College of Dermatology Meeting, Melbourne, May 17-21

Oral presentation "Clinical and histological features in 72 women with erosive vulvovaginal lichen planus"

Abstract for publication in *Australasian Journal of Dermatology*

New Zealand Dermatological Society Meeting, Dunedin, August 2014

Abstract accepted for oral presentation "Quality of life and sexual distress in women with vulval dermatoses"

"Diagnosing erosive vulvovaginal lichen planus: The new criteria"

Paper submitted for publication May 2014 (currently undergoing peer review),
Journal of Lower Genital Tract Disease