

gnancy in infertile women and the still unclear PGE₂ effects, we decided on medical treatment only in patients for whom microsurgical operation was not indicated. We intend to check the patency of affected tubes with hysterosalpingography.

The data in existing literature (^{11, 13}) report on a high percentage of patent tubes after the medical treatment of ectopic pregnancy, as well as on a high percentage in later intrauterine pregnancies. That is the main reason for our expecting similar results in the treatment with PGE₂ and for hoping it will help treat ectopic pregnancy successfully, also in subfertile women.

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SEX DURING PREPREGNANCY PERIOD. A STUDY OF 106 PLURIPAROUS WOMEN IN RELATION TO PARITY

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Summary: The Authors study the correlation between sexual activity and parity in 106 pluriparous Sicilian women divided into 3 groups with parity respectively of 1 (57 cases), 2 (29 cases), and ≥ 3 (20 cases). Sexual desire, frequency of coitus and orgasm, type of extra-coital activity, preferred position during coitus, the partner who took the first initiative in sexual activity, and the contraceptive methods used were studied. The results show that in women of parity ≥ 3 there is a significantly lower frequency of very frequent coitus, higher frequency of extra-coital sexual activity, and that the male more frequently took the first initiative in sexual intercourse.

Key words: parity; sexuality; sexual behavior; coitus; orgasm.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual behavior of women in good health is conditioned by many factors which are not always clearly identified. Among these age, social conditions, level of education, ethnic affiliation, job, religious faith, free time available, stress conditions, income, etc. have been studied (Kinsey 1953, Masters and Johnson 1967, Pfeiffer *et al.* 1972, Compton *et al.* 1974, Hite 1977, Elliott and Watson 1985, Gillan 1987).

The aim of this study is to evaluate some parameters of sexual behavior in pluriparous Sicilian women in relation to parity.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

106 women who had delivered healthy babies at the First Clinic of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Catania University Medical School, Catania (Italy), in March 1985 were interviewed by one of the Authors via a semistructured questionnaire (Table 1), filled in during physical check up, one to six days after childbirth, and the form of the questionnaire could be changed according to the flow of the interview. The women replied to questions on sexual behaviour in the year preceding pregnancy, and were subdivided into three groups of parity 1 (57 cases), 2 (29 cases), and ≥ 3 (20 cases). The average ages were 25.6, 26.9 and 27.1 years, in parity 1, 2 and ≥ 3 respectively.

The sample consisted of women born and raised in Sicily and the majority were living in Catania or its outskirts. All women were Roman Catholics with an educational level no greater than junior or high school. Work activity did not vary significantly in the three groups: 78.95% (45 cases) of parity 1 women, 72.42% (21 cases) of parity 2 women and 95% (19 cases) of parity ≥ 3 women were housewives. The other women were employed. 74.47% (80 cases) of women were married. The sample studied is representative of the population in our hospital.

The frequency of premarital cohabitation was similar in the 3 groups. 35.08% (20 cases) of parity 1 women, 24.13% (7 cases) of parity 2 women, and 25% (5 cases) of parity ≥ 3 women had lived with the man they are now married to. In no instance did the women live with a man that she did not subsequently marry. The length of premarital cohabitation varied from 4

Table 1. - *Questionnaire.*

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- Age
 - Parity 1, 2, ≥ 3
 - Level of education primary: low, high school, university
 - Type of work
 - Religious faith
 - Type of contraception actually used: coitus interruptus, condom, basal body temperature, Billing's method, oral pill, intrauterine device, diaphragm, others, none
 - Number of sexual relationships with vaginal coitus before marriage
 - Cohabitation before marriage
 - Length of cohabitation before marriage
 - Did you marry the man with whom you lived before marriage?
 - Sexual desire: normal, decreased
 - Frequency of vaginal coitus: rare, 1-2, 3-4, ≥ 5 per week
 - Frequency or orgasm (both during vaginal and extravaginal activities, i.e. oral coitus): always, almost always, usually yes, usually no, never
 - Type of sexual extrvaginal activity: masturbation, oral and anal coitus
 - Level of sexual satisfaction: unsatisfying, satisfying, very satisfying
 - Which partner usually initiates sexual activity: both, him, her.
-

to 72 months, without any differences in the three groups of women.

Six women (three women with parity 1 and three with parity 2) had had one or two relationships that involved vaginal coitus, prior to cohabitation or marriage, with a man that they did not subsequently marry.

From the study of contraceptive methods used it was observed that only 4 women reported the use of estroprogestins (1 with parity 1, 2 with parity 2, and 1 with parity ≥ 3) and 3 used intrauterine devices (1 with parity 1 and 2 with parity 2). The most commonly reported methods were coitus interruptus (62.26%, 66 cases) and periodic abstinence (11.32% - 12 cases).

Parameters studied included the presence of sexual desire (defined as "normal" according to some patients, i.e., it was the desire for one intercourse per week for one woman, or two or more for another woman), frequency of vaginal coitus (rare, 1-2, 3-4, ≥ 5 week), preferred position for vaginal coitus (lying down position with the man or the woman on top, rear position, others, any position), and frequency of

Sex during prepregnancy period. A study of 106 pluriparous women in relation to parity

orgasm during both vaginal and extravaginal sexual activities (always, almost always, usually yes, usually no, never), which partner took the first initiative in sexual intercourse (he, she, both), the type of sexual extracoital activity (oral or anal coitus, masturbation), and the level of sexual satisfaction (unsatisfying, satisfying, very satisfying).

The statistical analysis given was carried out by chi square method and a value of $p \leq 0.05$ was considered significant.

RESULTS

Sexual desire in the three groups was normal in all cases. Only 1 parity 2 woman who did not use any form of contraception refused coitus for fear of pregnancy (Table 2). The frequency of vaginal coitus was not significantly different between the three parity groups although there was a trend towards lower frequency reported in the parity ≥ 3 group (1 or 2 per week was reported by 40% of ≥ 3 parity group compared to 23% of parity 1 and 28% of parity 2; 5 or more was reported by only 10% of the ≥ 3 parity group compared to 21% of parity 1 and 14% of parity 2). In the total sample only 1 woman reported vaginal coitus as rare. The most commonly reported frequency was 3 or 4 times per week (54.71% - 58 cases), with a further 29 women (27.35%) reporting intercourse once or twice per week. Only 18 of the women (16.98%) reported frequency of coitus to be 5 or more times per week.

The majority of women (68.87% - 73 cases) regardless of parity had no preference regarding position for coitus; in 28.30% of cases (30 cases) the woman preferred coitus in a lying position with the man on top and in 2.8% (3 cases) the woman preferred to be on top of the man.

31.13% (33 cases) of the women reported extravaginal coital sex, and this was represented almost exclusively by oral coitus (32 cases) with a frequency statistically higher in parity ≥ 3 women compared to those with parity 1 (<0.01).

Table 2. - *Sexual behavior in relation to parity (1, 2, ≥ 3). Comparisons are made between parity 1 women vs parity 2 women, parity 1 women vs parity ≥ 3 women, and between parity 2 vs parity 3 women).*

Parity	1 57 cases		2 29 cases		≥ 3 20 cases	
a) <i>Frequency of coitus</i>						
rare	1	1.75	-	-	-	-
1 or 2 a week	13	22.8	8	27.58	8	40.0
3 or 4 a week	31	54.3	17	58.62	10	50.0
5 to 7 a week	12	21.05	4	13.79	2	10.0
b) <i>Frequency of orgasm</i>						
always	10	17.54 ¹	- ¹	-	2	10.0
almost always	21	36.84	15	51.7	6	30.0
usually "yes"	18	31.57	13	44.8	10	50.0
usually "no"	2	3.50	1	3.4	2	10.0
never	6	10.52	-	-	-	-
¹ <0.05						
c) <i>Initiation of sexual activity</i>						
she	1	1.75	-	-	-	-
he	11 ^{1 2}	19.20	13 ¹	44.82	10 ²	50.0
both	45	78.90	16	55.17	10	50.0
¹ $p < 0.05$ ² $p < 0.05$						
b) <i>Level of sexual satisfaction</i>						
unsatisfying	2	3.50	1	3.44	-	-
satisfying	45	78.94	23	79.31	15	75.0
very satisfying	10	17.54	5	17.24	5	25.0

Only one woman with parity 2 reported having anal coitus.

The majority of women (66.98% - 71) reported that usually both took the initiative in sex (Table 2). This was particularly true for parity 1 women (45 out of 57), only 11 (19%) of whom reported that the man usually took the initiative and one parity 1 woman usually took the

initiative herself (with the aim of getting pregnant). No woman of parity 2 or more reported usually taking the initiative themselves. The initiative was taken by the man in half (10 cases - 50%) of the couples with 3 or more children and in nearly half (13 cases - 44.82%) of the couples with 2 children. The number of couples in which the male took the first initiative in sexual intercourse was significantly higher in both parity 2 (13 cases - 44.82%) and ≥ 3 (10 cases - 50%) women in comparison to parity 1 women (11 cases - 11.29%) ($p < 0.05$ in both cases).

The frequency of orgasm was usually included between «almost always» and «usually yes». 17.54% (11 cases) of parity 1 women and 10% (2 cases) of parity ≥ 3 women «always» had an orgasm, while none of the parity 2 women and 12.28% (7 cases) of parity 1 women never had orgasm. The orgasm frequency «always» in parity 1 women compared to parity 2 was statistically higher ($p < 0.05$).

The level of sexual satisfaction was «satisfactory» or «very satisfactory» in 97.16% (103 cases) (Table 2); it was unsatisfactory only in a small percentage of parity 1 women (3.5%, 2 cases) and parity 2 women (3.45%, 1 case) with no statistical differences in the 3 groups of women.

It was interesting to note that there was not always a correlation between sexual satisfaction and frequency of orgasm, since six parity 1 women had never experienced orgasm, as well as 2 women who did not usually experience orgasm, but only 2 women (1 never experienced orgasm and 1 usually not) defined their sexual relationship as «not satisfactory».

DISCUSSION

Our questionnaire studied some aspects of sexual behavior in Sicilian pluriparous women in relation to parity (1, 2, ≥ 3).

On analysis of the parameters examined regarding same aspects of sexual behavior it is noted that all women reported sexual desire as normal, the majority of women reported vaginal coitus 1 to 4 times per week with more than half reporting 3 to 4 times per week. Their sex life was described as unsatisfying by only 3 women, and few reported that sexual activity (both vaginal and extravaginal, i.e., oral coitus) was «never» or «usually not» accompanied by orgasm. There were no differences among the three groups.

Only 1 parity 2 woman refused coitus for fear of pregnancy. This observation shows a peculiar aspect of the population in this study, that is, the rare use of safe contraceptive methods. Out of the 106 women in our study, only 4 reported the use of estroprogestins and 3 intrauterine devices. The contraceptive methods most frequently reported were coitus interruptus and periodical abstinence. A possible explanation for the lack of safe contraceptive method is the religiousness of the women interviewed. The Roman Catholic church permits natural, but unsafe natural contraceptive methods, i.e. basal body temperature or Billing's method. Consequently the fear of unwanted pregnancy may limit sexual activity in some days of the ovarian cycle. Furthermore Roman Catholics regard sex as guilt, and emphasize procreation more than sexual enjoyment. The negative effect of the Catholic religious faith on sexual behavior is evident from many studies (Compton *et al.* 1974, Notzer *et al.* 1984, Halstead et Halstead 1978, Sandiuk *et al.* 1983) even if the frequency of sexual dysfunction is no different in Roman Catholic church-goers in comparison to Roman Catholic non church-goers (Pepe *et al.*, in press).

In our study a high percentage of men began sexual activity. Many women miss out on sexuality because they think they should be passive, because in many cultu-

res (such as the Italian culture) women are conditioned at an early age to behave « like ladies » and not be sexually active (Gillan 1987).

The reported frequency of extravaginal coital activity was 30.18% in the three groups of women interviewed and it was significantly higher in parity 2 and ≥ 3 women. In comparison, the Redbook Study in 1974 showed that some 90% of the American wives have engaged in oral sexual intercourse, and some 43% in anal intercourse (Tavris et Sados, 1974). It is possible that this data is undervalued due to the reticence of the patients.

In conclusion sexual behavior did not greatly vary in relation to the women's parity, although parity ≥ 3 women reported a lower frequency of « very frequent » coitus, a higher frequency of extra-coital sexual activity, and their partners more frequently took the first initiative in sexual activity. The most likely explanation for the lack of evident difference of sexual behavior in these three groups of women is that all were in fertile age and shared many common characteristics, i.e., average age, religious

faith, level of education, type of work and sexual experience.

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A CLINICAL AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY OF 245 POSTMENOPAUSAL METRORRHAGIA PATIENTS

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Précis: Endometrial adenocarcinoma or atypical hyperplasia was found in 24.4% of the cases with postmenopausal bleeding; associated conditions at risk were obesity, nulliparity, and age over 60 years.

Summary: The Authors report the incidence of endometrial adenocarcinoma and atypical hyperplasia in 245 women who had undergone uterine curettage for post-menopausal bleeding.

In 4 cases a stenosis of the cervix precluded the curettage.