Decreasing incidence of Syphilis among pregnant women in a tertiary care hospital

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ABSTRACT
A study was carried out at Shadan Institute Medical Sciences & Post Graduate Research Institute, Hyderabad to know the incidence of syphilis amongst pregnant women. This study was carried out over a period of 6 years from January 2011 to December 2012 in the antenatal clinics of Shadan Institute of Medical Sciences. A total of 5580 pregnant women were screened for syphilis by the RPR testing. Out of these 5580 antenatal cases as tested, six were found to be positive. This shows the incidence of 0.10%. They were screened at their first Antenatal visit, as Syphilis is a major cause of adverse poor pregnancy outcome & can affect the foetus causing congential syphilis in the newborn.

Keywords:- Syphilis, Pregnancy, R.P.R

INTRODUCTION
Syphilis, a Sexually transmitted disease is caused by Treponema pallidum, which was discovered by Schaudinn and Hoffmann in 1905 in the chancres and inguinal lymph nodes of syphilitic patients. Syphilis is still a major public health problem in many parts of the world. It is common even in developed countries[1]. Throughout the world, annually 340 million cases of Sexually transmitted Infections occur every year. Syphilis accounts for about 12 million cases throughout the world, and the incidence in pregnant women is 2 million[2].

A woman may become infected during pregnancy. Syphilis has disastrous effects on pregnancy outcome. It is responsible for late abortion, stillbirth and neonatal infection. The Spirochetes cross the placenta easily, but not before 18 weeks. The fetus can get infected during any stage of syphilis, and in the fetus every organ is likely to be affected. A neonate affected by syphilis has hepatosplenomegaly, ascites and jaundice. It can suffer from ‘snuffles’ or rhinitis, nephrosis, lymphadenopathy and osteochondritis, perinatal morbidity and hence screening for syphilis is indicated because of the risk for congenital infection & fetal loss [3], and because of it is associated with increased risk of HIV infection [4]. In India, screening of syphilis is recommended for every pregnant mother in the first antenatal visit, it can be repeated in the third trimester of pregnancy to see for any new infection during pregnancy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
In this present study serum samples from a total of 5580 antenatal women were tested for syphilis for a period of 6 years from January 2007 to December 2012, in the antenatal clinic of Shadan Institute of Medical Sciences & Post Graduate Research Centre at Peerancheru, Hyderabad. All the serum samples were subjected to RPR testing; which
was done using standard methods & quantitative methods were performed on positive samples. A positive RPR indicates that the sample is positive for syphilis.

RESULTS

Out of 5580 samples tested six were seen positive for syphilis. Showing a seroprevalence of 0.10%. All the positive cases were young pregnant women the age group of 19 to 22 years.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the world’s population – the prevalence of syphilis ranges from a high of 12.1% to as low as 0.02% [5]. In my study the incidence is low i.e. 0.10%. According to WHO studies the prevalence of maternal syphilis in India has been recorded on 1.5% from 2003 to 2007. In a study by Hussain, the reported incidence was 0.85% [6]. In another study by Al Sibiani was 0.02% of syphilis in antenatal women[7]. In this study of 5580 antenatal cases the incidence is low i.e. 0.10%.

According to Okoko IO et al. study, 1.5% prevalence of syphilis was reported[8].

CONCLUSION

In the last few decades, there has been a decline in the incidence of syphilis. This may be attributed to the widespread use of antibiotics. Consequently, the incidence of congenital syphilis has also been decreased. The low incidence in this study could be due to greater awareness of the disease, safe sex practices, effective health education regarding HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

It's mandatory that every pregnant woman must be tested for syphilis at the earliest, because the woman with early syphilis can infect her fetus much more commonly than one with syphilis of over two years duration.

REFERENCES