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Programme & Book of Abstracts
DETERMINANTS OF VAGINAL HEALTH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN FEMALE HEALTH AND NON HEALTH WORKERS IN A TERTIARY HEALTH FACILITY

OKOJIE OE¹, OKUSANYA BO¹²

Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, ¹Lagos University Teaching Hospital, and ²Faculty of Clinical Sciences, College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Idi Araba, Lagos.

Correspondence: Okojie OE; E-mail: dr.oekojie@gmail.com

Background and Objectives: Vaginal discharge is one of the commonest symptoms of gynaecological morbidity. Appropriate knowledge of differentiating characteristics and other associated symptoms between normal and abnormal vaginal discharge is vital to good health seeking behaviour. The study compared the perceptions of, attitude and practice towards vaginal discharge of female health and non-health workers.

Materials and Methods: The study was a descriptive cross sectional study involving 200 women. Data were collected with structured self-administered questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS ® 21. Univariate and bivariate statistical analysis were conducted to compare responses of the two groups of women and significance set at p<value 0.05.

Results: The health workers and non-health workers had a mean age of 30.6±6.3 years, and 36±8.7 years respectively. Majority (84%) of health workers, unlike some non-health workers (66%) perceived vaginal discharge as normal and this was significant (p < 0.005). The reporting of associated symptoms characterizing an abnormal vaginal discharge was similar in both groups (p>0.05), though the identification of risk factors for abnormal vaginal discharge was significantly different (p<0.05). Significantly more health workers perceived douching as a risk factor for vaginal discharge and more knew of Pap’s smear (p < 0.05), but fewer health workers had done Pap’s smear than non-health workers.

Conclusions: As expected, female health workers had a better perception than their non-health worker counterparts on vaginal discharge. Health workers’ better knowledge of Pap smear was not matched by their uptake of the procedure, hence creating a great gap between knowledge and practice, when compared with non-health workers. Increasing awareness in form of health education is needed to improve health seeking practice and behaviour among women.

Keywords: Perception, practice, vaginal discharge, health, non-health workers