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KNOWLEDGE OF PREGNANTS ABOUT THE CYTOPATHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION: A STUDY IN BASIC HEALTH CARE

CONHECIMENTO DE GESTANTES SOBRE O EXAME CITOPATOLÓGICO: UM ESTUDO NA ATENÇÃO BÁSICA EM SAÚDE

CONOCIMIENTO DE EMBARAZADAS A CERCA DEL EXAMEN CITOPATOLÓGICO: UN ESTUDIO SOBRE EL CUIDADO DE LA SALUD BÁSICA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: identifying the knowledge of pregnant women about the cytopathological examination. **Method:** a descriptive and exploratory study, which involved 24 pregnant women aged between 16 and 40 years old, with different schooling, conducted in the waiting room of the nursing prenatal of a Decentralized Health Area, of the Family Health Strategy of the municipality of Quixeramobim (Ceará), Brazil. There was used the application of an instrument on the knowledge of pregnant women about the test, as approved by the Research Ethics Committee, Protocol nº 173/09. **Results:** of the total respondents, 22 claimed not to know say what the risk factors to which women develop cervical cancer and only two said they had knowledge about the subject. **Conclusion:** the results suggest the need for an educational approach directed to pregnant women, users of the health units of primary care, in order to clarify, in a continuous manner, which involves both the cytopathological examination as cancer of the cervix. **Descriptors:** Vaginal Swab; Pregnant Women; Knowledge.

RESUMO

Objetivo: identificar o conhecimento de gestantes acerca do exame citopatológico. **Método:** estudo descritivo e exploratório, no qual participaram 24 gestantes com idade variável entre 16 e 40 anos, com diferentes escolaridades, foi realizado na sala de espera da consulta de enfermagem ao pré-natal de uma Área Descentralizada de Saúde, da Estratégia Saúde da Família, do município de Quixeramobim (CE), Brasil. Utilizou-se a aplicação de um instrumento sobre o conhecimento das gestantes em relação ao exame, conforme aprovação do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, Protocolo nº 173/09. **Resultados:** do total de entrevistadas, 22 afirmaram não saber dizer quais os fatores de risco para que a mulher desenvolva o câncer do colo do útero e apenas duas afirmaram ter ciência quanto ao assunto. **Conclusão:** os resultados denotam a necessidade de um enfoque educativo direcionado às gestantes, usuárias das unidades de saúde da atenção básica, com o intuito de esclarecer, de forma contínua, o que envolve tanto a realização do exame citopatológico como o câncer do colo do útero. **Descritores:** Esfregaço Vaginal; Gestantes; Conhecimento.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: identificar los conocimientos de las mujeres embarazadas acerca del examen citopatológico. **Método:** es un estudio descriptivo y exploratorio, el cual involucró a 24 mujeres embarazadas con edades comprendidas entre 16 y 40 años, con diferente educación, llevado a cabo en la sala de espera de enfermería prenatal de una Área Descentralizada de Salud, de la Estrategia de Salud de la Familia, del municipio de Quixeramobim (Ceará), Brasil. Se utilizó la aplicación de un instrumento en el conocimiento de las mujeres embarazadas acerca de la prueba, tal como fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética de la Investigación, el Protocolo nº 173/09. **Resultados:** del total de las encuestadas, 22 afirmaron no saber decir lo que los factores de riesgo que las mujeres desarrollan cáncer de cuello uterino y sólo dos dijeron que tenían el conocimiento sobre el tema. **Conclusión:** los resultados sugieren la necesidad de un enfoque educativo dirigido a las mujeres embarazadas, usuarias de las unidades de salud de la atención primaria, con el fin de aclarar, de una manera continua, que implica tanto la prueba de citopatología vaginal como el cáncer del cuello del útero. **Descriptores:** Frotis Vaginal; Mujeres Embarazadas; Conocimiento.

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INTRODUCTION

Cancer of the cervix, with approximately 500.000 new cases per year worldwide, has its typology as the second most common among females, being the cause of death of 230.000 women per year. Regarding incidence, this is about two times higher in less developed countries, compared with more developed countries.¹

In terms of age group at risk for this type of cancer, this occurs between 20 and 29 years old. However, its risk gradually increases until it reaches its peak, which corresponds to the age group 45-49 years old. Such consideration arises that, in Brazil, the cytopathological examination for women 25-59 years old is primarily recommended screening strategy by the Ministry of Health,¹ however, although it is set as a considerable public health problem, which should focus on the attention of the national health authorities, as well as their professionals, one realizes that his primary means of early detection, the cytopathological examination, for various reasons, does not have yet total membership of the female contingent.²

Although the practice of preventive examination of cervical cancer is available free of charge at health units, being painless and rapidly done, one realizes that there is a considerable ignorance from the part of women about its finality.³ A study conducted previously noted that these women had a higher risk of not having Pap tests: those that have no mate, those with only 5-8 years of schooling, those who have not consulted a physician in the last three months, those aged 25-29 years old and those who not shows leukorrhea.⁴

Nevertheless, during pregnancy, the disgust in cytopathological examination tends to be more exacerbated.⁵ In daily care of the public service pregnant women show a rejection behavior against the request of said exame.⁶ However, the practice of such examination becomes clear as indispensable in this period, since cervical cancer is the malignancy by most often diagnosed during pregnancy.⁶⁻⁷ There has thus reiterated the importance of routine then included in the health professional responsible for prenatal the monitoring of the last realization of cytopathological examination, this should happen in the first consultations, since the mother will have a specialized treatment in the following months, facilitating the planning of various interventions. The gestational period therefore offers a unique opportunity for cytopathological examination.

When emphasizing the Prenatal Care, it seeks to emphasizing that in such consultations nursing professionals have the ability to promote understanding of the gestation process and clarifying any doubts related, thus fulfilling his role as an educator and health promoter.⁸ And, more specifically, have the opportunity to dispel the myths about pregnancy, and seek adherence to their care, which contributes to the clarification and acceptance of cervical cancer examination in pregnancy.

Moreover, for cytopathological examination in pregnant women is so needed technical knowledge as the understandings of the subjective factors that influence the perception of customers in such examination and in that directly affect their adhesion. However, the production of targeted knowledge to the evaluation focus is not significantly in national context, given the small number of publications on the topic in Brazilian scientific journals.⁹

The care for pregnant women should be done to reduce the rates of maternal and infant morbidity and mortality, adopting measures to ensure improved access, coverage and quality of prenatal care, from the assistance to birth and postpartum and to neonatal care.¹⁰

This study aim to identify the knowledge of pregnant women about cytopathological examination.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative study of descriptive and exploratory nature, since it was intended to seek an explanation in the everyday aspects of the research participants. The descriptive studies are intended to observe, classify and describe a phenomenon and the frequency with which this occurs.¹¹ In turn, exploratory studies allow the researcher to widen their experience around a particular problem.¹²

This study was carried out in the waiting room from the nursing consultation to prenatal of a Decentralized Area of Health (ADS - in Portuguese), of the Family Health Strategy (FHS), of the municipality of Quixeramobim - Ceará. Therein are met about 1.190 families in ten service points. Of these, only two are health posts. Other are houses given by the population temporarily for service. For the period of data collection, this was between the months of July and August 2009.

The chosen population to participate in this study was composed by pregnant women with prenatal consultations scheduled for the

period of data collection. There were followed the following inclusion criteria: women in gestational period and residents enrolled in the zone of the city of choice.

Interviews were conducted by applying a tool through open and closed questions, and divided as follows: 1. Socio-demographic characteristics; 2. Knowledge on issues related to cytopathological examination; 3. Knowledge about cytopathological examination.

The answers were systematized and grouped according to their specificities. Apart from the above, excerpts of responses that expressed knowledge of the interviewees were selected, having been all results discussed in the light of relevant literature.

The ethical principles of this research are consistent with the parameters of Resolution 196/96 of the National Health Council of the Ministry of Health, which provides for the guidelines and rules for research involving humans. Contemplate, as well: the guarantee of anonymity, data access, and the possibility to withdraw from the research at the moment when is chosen by such conduct, without that this brings onus of any kind.

In addition, such research has obtained written authorization from the Federal University of Ceará Research Ethics Research Committee (COMEPE), through the protocol n. 173/09.

RESULTS

The study included 24 pregnant women whose prenatal care is performed in a unit of the Family Health Strategy (FHS). From the pregnant women participants, 12 were between 16 to 20 years old, seven from 21 to 30, and five aged between 31 and 40. Regarding marital status, 12 of the interviewees stated they were married or have a stable relationship, 11 single and one claimed to be a widow.

Regarding education, 11 reported having a fundamental level, seven reported having middle level and five reported being illiterate and one had a higher level. Referring to the profession, 18 are farmers, five perform household services and one claimed to be a student.

Regarding family income, this was divided as follows: 12 reported having no official income equivalent to the national minimum wage, 11 receive a minimum wage and one claimed to have income of two minimum wages.

In the second stage of the interview, which dealt about knowledge on subjects related to

cytopathological examination, of the total respondents, 22 said they do not know to say that the risk factors for the woman to develop cancer of the cervix and only two reported having knowledge on the subject, however, to respond to what are these factors, two participants reported relationship with:

Women over 35 years old. (G1)
Advanced age. (G5)

All interviewed denied having ever been diagnosed with human papillomavirus (HPV). However, when questioned if they knew what it was to explain, denied knowing these 20, and while four said they were aware. However, the conceptual answers given were:

It is that disease in the propaganda that passes, the woman came out with a man, do not use a condom and took it. (G2)
I think it's something related to AIDS. (G5)
Disease that occurs in women. (G12)
Disease that occurs in the uterus. (G18)

In agreement with the data already presented, when asked about what the relation between HPV and cervical cancer all pregnant women surveyed denied knowing. When asked about the reasons for such unknowledge, 14 reported never having been informed and 10 reported having been informed at the Health Unit, but knew not explain or had forgotten.

Regarding the third stage of the interview, which dealt on the knowledge of pregnant women about cytopathological examination, six did not know the purpose of the cytopathological examination, while 18 said they know the reason for such examination, and thus justified their responses: seven interviewees stated that the performance of such tests is to:

Know if you have disease. (G1, G2, G5, G8, G13, G17, G20)
Prevent the disease. (G3, G6, G15, G19)
Know if you have cancer (G4, G7, G10, G16)
Prevent cancer and a sexually transmitted disease (STD). (G9, G14)
Know of women's health. (G6)

When asked if they considered important to the performance of such tests, all the women interviewed responded positively. About the presence of cancer in the family, 18 interviewed denied, while six said such an occurrence. The types of cancer have been reported: breast, cervix, lung, prostate and stomach.

When asked if they used to undergo cytopathological examination, 15 responded positively and nine negatively. Of the total respondents who usually conduct such a survey, 11 held once a year, the two rarely, one of every six months and one does every

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two years. With regard to pregnant women who do not usually perform Pap screening, seven said they did not do so because they feel shame, for never having been directed to do so and not understanding what it's for.

Relating to the care that women should note before the exam, 17 pregnant women, the total number of interviewees claimed to have knowledge, since the orientation of not having intercourse the day before was reported seven times, to not take the exam in period in which they are menstruating was recalled eight times, the orientation of performing shaving pubic hair was recollected three times not to use vaginal cream was reported three times, orientation to cleanliness was mentioned twice and did not make use of talc was asserted once. However, seven of the women interviewed had denied having any information about such care.

About the way how have already received information about Pap screening, 21 pregnant women reported having been informed through home visits by community health workers and / or the Health Unit, through the nurse, while three reported never having received any information.

When responding if they believed to be important the cytopathological examination during pregnancy, 17 responded affirmatively. However, seven denied such importance. Referring to the answers which the interviewees stated the importance of the examination, 10 mentioned that such an examination is to:

Not transmit disease to the child. (G1, G2, G5, G7, G8, G10, G11, G13, G16, G19)

Prevent disease. (G2, G15)

Health. (G20)

Prevent inflammation. (G3)

Prevent bacteria for both the mother and the child. (G12)

Not have cancer (G7)

Know if you have something, it is not affect pregnancy. (G18)

When asked to choose one answer from some listed or refer other knowledge about what could cause the performance of such tests during pregnancy, 13 said that the exam would not harm the pregnancy, three said it bothered her or the fetus made trauma, three said which could induce an abortion three said they could anticipate labor and two were unable to explain.

About the question if they would like more information about Pap screening during the prenatal period, 21 of the women interviewed felt positively, while three reported not to be necessary.

About the reasons why pregnant women refute and/or do not like to make such examination during prenatal, eleven reported fear, five could not explain, two mentioned the shame, two fear of aborting two attributed to the fact of not wanting do, one reported that bothers and a reported lack of information.

DISCUSSION

Through the analysis of demographic data collected was observed, including age, the prevalence was between 16 to 20 years old. Thus, among those surveyed, not in the age group between 45 and 49, which corresponds to the years of greatest risk of occurrence of cervical cancer.¹

In addition, neither woman above that age, which also represent a risk population were interviewed. One can infer that this fact occurs because, by no longer having active sex life, they no longer seek health services. And this attitude ends up being as a condition for well abandonment of queries as well as gynecological examinations.⁴

Although women in the climacteric period with greatest risk for this type of cancer, it is important to highlight the fact that the respondents are below this age group and in full reproductive period. The appearance of these women to health care for this type of services should be put in relief as conduct maintenance and concern for their health.

Regarding education, the majority of the women had a formal school education, having completed only the top level. Such variables should be considered when planning to work with public health policies or even their validation, since health education requires a combination of opportunities favoring the promotion and maintenance of health.¹³ Apart from the above, when issues are addressed involving health or disease, these relate to, socio- cultural, political, ideological and historical circumstances. Thus, people should be considered in view of their positions, classes and social groups to which they belong.¹⁴

With regard to knowledge about risk factors for women to develop cervical cancer, the fact that most of the women interviewed have responded to ignore such factors reveals a fact that directly affects adherence and self-care of these users. In addition, pregnant women who had previous knowledge, made reference only to the age factor, what is inferred that remembered disclosures about a possible pregnancy risk. It is assumed, therefore, that in reality, there is a lack of knowledge about risk for developing cervical

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cancer factors, such as early onset of sexual activity, multiple sexual partners, and smoking, inadequate personal hygiene, prolonged use of oral contraceptives, misinformation, and poor access to regular controls, among others.

We observe initially a poor knowledge of the women surveyed, which directs you to the nursing diagnosis knowledge deficit, which is by definition the absence or deficiency of cognitive information related to a specific topic.¹⁵ More specifically, in according to study conducted among nursing diagnoses in care for pregnant women, the deficits of knowledge that a higher frequency were related to the purpose and importance of the speculum examination to collect cervix-vaginal material, coupled with self-breast exam.¹⁶

Relative to knowledge about HPV and its implications in relation to the onset of cervical cancer, the data are revealing, since despite all the women interviewed claim never to have had a diagnosis of HPV, also the overwhelming majority could not explain the it was, and all denied knowing what is the relationship between HPV and cervical cancer.

On being asked about the purpose of the Pap smear testing, although the responses reveal a superficial understanding, also indicate a perception of health-disease concept and the importance of prevention and detection of pathologies. What is consistent with the understanding that the woman, most often, perceives the screening test as a diagnostic tool, not as a preventive routine incorporating.¹⁷ And in keeping with this line of thought, all pregnant women surveyed responded affirmatively when asked if they considered important to Pap smear testing.

As to the timing, it is observed relative predominance of women who usually hold Pap screening and that most of these the place once a year, and in line with the period recommended by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and practiced in the FHS.

Relating to the care that must be observed prior to the Pap smear testing period, although most of the pregnant women interviewed claimed to have knowledge of what these care, it is observed that the responses again show fragmentation and partial understanding with quote only one care for every pregnant researched, careful not to be menstruating, as well as a misunderstanding of the subject addressed, which is ratified by assertions that a care would not make use of talc and even not being pregnant. Nevertheless, a portion of those interviewed denied having knowledge of

such care, which contributes to the possibility of error in obtaining or collecting test results, as well as the need for a review of the educational and informative work.

Faced with such inferences, highlights the importance of nursing as a means of disseminating knowledge, as well as a tool for the effective performance of such tests, once daily at FHS, the nurse is inserted in all activities of cancer prevention cervical, with relevant role when it emphasizes that this professional conducts the largest number of cytological samples at the level of primary care.¹⁸

In accordance with the foregoing, the nursing consultation must allow women full assistance, and is characterized in a unique opportunity to work in health education, with emphasis on the development of a preventive behavior.¹⁹

Of all pregnant women participating in the research, the majority confirmed the importance of cervical cancer screening during pregnancy and justified his understanding, repeatedly, with statements that involve idea of self-care, allied with notions of prevention and care of the fetus. We observe, therefore, an understanding directed to prevent any "inflammation" or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), of which, properly, for cancer of the cervix. Including the number seven among the 24 women surveyed who denied the relevance of such an examination during pregnancy, shows a lack of knowledge on the implications of Pap smear testing. Apart from the above, the reasons suggested by interviewees to other pregnant women do not accept and/or do not like to perform Pap screening were divided between fear, the shame, the fact of just not wanting to do so, provided the nuisance and the lack of information. However, in order to minimize the intensity of those feelings and bring comfort to the user, it is necessary to consider respect for privacy as an essential attitude during the examination.²⁰

These results serve as a guidance for an assessment by the nurse on how to improve compliance rates for their clientele, in particular, pregnant women who perform prenatal, considering the degree of subjectivity of the feminine universe, respect for cultural differences as well as the need for bond formation and ongoing assessment of the population's knowledge regarding the implications of such tests, since such an examination reveals itself as essential in maintaining the health of women and transversely, the entire population.²¹

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The obtained results, although of limited representation, when considering the number of participants, denote the need for an educational approach directed to pregnant women, users of the health units of primary care, in order to clarify, continuously, what involves both the cytopathological examination as cervical cancer, once deficient knowledge directly affects the statistics of adherence to examination as well as the annual estimates of cervical cancer.

Although the study has limitations, it is considered that their goals have been achieved, for reporting the knowledge of pregnant women about gynecological examination was the main focus to be given, despite the specific age range and quantity of women interviewed.

It was also observed the primary need to train health professionals to interact with the world of users to create bonds of trust and mutual respect in order to know how to treat both interpret worldviews in many different ways, respecting the externalized feelings for the woman. In the meantime, a point of utmost importance is to emphasize health promotion through educational strategies.

Nurses who work in the Family Health Strategy have several possibilities for action in this field, which may contribute to an increased awareness of the public regarding the need for adherence to the gynecological examination. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the nuances involving the entire context of the feminine universe, so that efficient and continuous educational activities are developed, particularly during the prenatal, which will corroborate for equitable and quality healthcare for population, since in some cases the prenatal consultation can be the first contact of the woman with health service. Thus, it is deemed necessary the cytopathological examination during this period.

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