

CLINICAL AND DIAGNOSTIC ASPECTS OF LOWER GENITAL TRACT INFECTIONS

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SUMMARY

Lower genital tract infections, e.g. vulvovaginitis, cervicitis and urethritis included are common, both in females, and males, in the reproductive period of life. They are source of further spread, and may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease. The symptoms and signs of lower genital tract infections, such as abnormal vaginal discharge, pruritus as well as cutaneous and mucous lesions, are not specific enough to establish the diagnosis. Therefore it is necessary to apply selectively relatively simple screening and confirmatory laboratory tests. A precise diagnosis of lower genital tract infections would improve an early diagnosis of important STDs in the community, and would help in promoting management strategies for genital tract infections.

KEY WORDS

lower genital tract infections, vulvovaginitis, cervicitis, urethritis

INTRODUCTION

Differences in male and female anatomy and reproductive physiology account for the greater risk of complications of certain sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in women and also for the greater difficulty in differential diagnosis of urogenital infections in women. In fact, the difficulty in diagnosing sexually transmitted urogenital infections in women undoubtedly results in delay of proper therapy, which contributes to the higher risk of complications in women and to further spread of infection in community.

Although the etiology of certain genitourinary and anorectal inflammatory conditions in women is still not well understood, it is now possible to identify many common and potentially serious STDs in

women by clinical observations of symptoms and signs, supplemented with the selective use of relatively simple screening and confirmatory laboratory tests.

VULVOVAGINITIS

Abnormal vaginal discharge and vulvar pruritus are the most common symptoms with which women attend a gynecological health service clinics. Vaginal infection is mainly caused by *Candida albicans*, due to an overgrowth of certain bacteria or *Trichomonas vaginalis* (1).

Trichomoniasis is the most prevalent non-viral sexually transmitted disease (2). The prevalence of the disease varies widely in different populations. In asymptomatic patients attending family planning clinics,

