



ISSN: 2395-7476
IJHS 2018; 4(1): 236-239
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www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 12-11-2017
Accepted: 17-12-2017

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A systematic review on the prevalence and management of PCOS through dietary modifications

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to find out the widespread prevalence of PCOS across the world along with its causes, people who all are affected and results of this disease. PCOS is most severe in Asian and American females; both are found to be the most affected ones followed by Caucasian ones, which are further followed by the African ones. So, it's necessary to know about the disease, its pathogenicity, symptoms and causes in females of different origin and what can be the preventive measures like dietary modifications and controlling other health conditions and other factors so as to avoid the disease or at least lowering the impact of the disease. Avoidance and early curing of the disease is the main motto of the research. Common symptoms of the disease include marked decrease in the female characters. Other symptoms like irregular or no menstruation, excess hairs on face, chest, stomach, thumbs, or toes, decrease in breast size, hair loss, acne, depression, weight gain, pelvic pain and infertility are also checked. Most commonly, it affects the females of reproductive age. This is one of the most widespread diseases across the world and if left untreated, may result in infertility and even uterine cancer and hence this study is done. This study focuses on the prevalence, management and dietary modifications of the disease.

Keywords: prevalence, dietary

Introduction

At the age of puberty both, male and female bodies start producing sex hormones, which differentiate them from each other. Female body produces estrogen, progesterone, gonadotropin releasing hormone, follicle stimulating hormone, and luteinizing hormone. ^[1] Along with this a small amount of male hormones are also produced in females namely androgen. ^[2] When the levels of androgen increases to a greater extend in females it leads to PCOS or Polycystic ovary syndrome. ^{[3][4]} In PCOS, there is irregular or no menstrual periods, excess facial and body hairs, heavy periods, patches of thick, darker, velvety skin, difficulty in getting pregnant, acne and pelvic pain. ^[5] Obesity, obstructive sleep apnea, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, mood swings and endometrial cancer are among the associated conditions of PCOS. ^[6] PCOS is the most common endocrine disorder among the age group of 18 to 44 years. ^[7] PCOS is majorly divided into five broad categories: Insulin Resistant PCOS/ Type 1 PCOS (due to underlying insulin and leptin resistance the risk of developing diabetes is increased along with the increase in testosterone levels. symptoms include weight gain, ovulatory interruptions, acne, facial hair, hair loss.), Non-Insulin Resistant PCOS/ Type 2 PCOS (women meet the criteria for PCOS but are nonresistant to insulin.), Non-Traditional PCOS 1 (in this ovulatory issues can be seen but with normal testosterone levels, insulin resistance is seen and hence obesity is also seen.), Non-Traditional PCOS 2 (in this normal ovulatory pattern is seen with increased levels of testosterone and mild insulin resistance is also observed.) and Idiopathic Hirsutism (in this normal ovulatory pattern is seen with increased levels of testosterone and no resistance to insulin is observed.) ^[8] Not everyone having ovarian cysts is suffering from PCOS nor everyone with PCOS has polycystic ovaries. ^[10] It is diagnosed by the detection of two of the following three conditions: no ovulation, high androgen levels, and ovarian cysts. ^{[3][8]} The cyst can be detected by pelvic ultrasound. ^[9]

Background

Due to number of reasons, PCOS is prevalent in different parts of the world. A large number o

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cases are being observed in India every year and an extensive study has been carried out to eliminate PCOS and its harmful effects. In different parts of India like Andhra Pradesh prevalence of PCOS among adolescents is 9.13%.^[11] In Lucknow, U.P., India 3.7% females 18-25 years of age are found to have PCOS.^[12] In a study conducted on 27,411 samples by Metropolis Healthcare Ltd. 17.6% (4,825) are found to have PCOS. The regional distribution of prevalence of PCOS is found to be 18.62% in North India, 25.88% in East India, 19.88% in West India, and 18% in South India. Thus, PCOS affects every fifth Indian female.^[13] In the neighboring countries like Pakistan, around 21.9% females are infertile of the total population, among which 38.5% of the infertility is due to PCOS.^[14] Another study conducted in The Aga Khan University Hospital, and Concept Fertility Centre, Karachi, Pakistan, from January 2003 till December 2004, a total of 508 were checked for the symptoms of PCOS. Among them 17.6% were found to have PCOS.^[15] In Bangladesh, a study was conducted on 16700 infertile females among which 31.7% of the female population is suffering from PCOS.^[16] Just like Pakistan and Bangladesh, Nepal's female population has been suffering from PCOS. About 5-10% of the total population of Nepal is suffering from PCOS.^[17] The rate of female population having PCOS in Myanmar is 5%.^[18] In China, 1,040 female who visited the Reproductive Medicine Center at Shandong Provincial Hospital Shandong University between January 2002 and December 2006 are found to be suffering from PCOS.^[19] The rate of females suffering from PCOS is about 2% in South China.^[20] The rate of prevalence of PCOS in Sri Lanka is found to be 6.3%.^[21] The rate of prevalence of PCOS in Thailand is moderate, which is of 5%.^[22] Individual studies were undertaken in Italy, Iran, and Japan and these studies have shown that the rate of PCOS is 4.3% in Italy, 14.6% in Iran and 26.2% in Japan.^[38] The rate of PCOS has been found high among Indian women as compared to that of their Caucasian counterparts.^[38] In the Asian subcontinent around 52% females are affected with PCOS.^[23] From a study in South Europe, the rate of prevalence of PCOS is 9% in Greece while the rate of PCOS is found to be 6.5% in Spain.^{[24][25]} While, in Europe as a whole the rate of prevalence is found to be as high as 20-22%.^[26] Australians have a high rate of females suffering from PCOS which is of 11%.^[27] Just like Australia, Africa has an alarming rate of female population affected with PCOS, which is about 10.48%.^[28] Countries like UK have a moderate rate of 8% of the total population suffering from PCOS.^[29] While in the USA the rate of PCOS is of 4% of the total female population.^[30] In a research it was found that around 5 million women in US are suffering from PCOS.^[32] Globally, the prevalence of PCOS changes with the change in the ethnic values of the person. Globally around 10% females are affected with PCOS.^[31] Foremost reason of the widespread of PCOS is found to be imbalance in women's sex hormones namely estrogen and progesterone.^[32] Other causes which play an important role in manifestation of PCOS are environmental conditions, natural selection of genes which directly affects the phenotype of the genes,^[33] sociocultural difference, difference in eating habits and patterns.^[34] Apart from these, the other reasons for the cause of PCOS are found to be excess of insulin (insulin is a hormone produced by the beta-cells of pancreas which helps in the glucose take up by the cells, when our body becomes resistant to insulin more amount of insulin is produced. this excess of insulin may lead to increased levels of androgen thus causing a problem in ovulation.), excess androgen (in

abnormal conditions the ovaries produce high levels of androgen which leads to acne and excess hairs on body.), heredity or family history (a person with family history of PCOS has chances of having PCOS.), low grade inflammation (our body produce white blood cells as a defense mechanism to fight against infections. Extensive researches proved that females with low grade inflammation stimulate polycystic ovaries to produce androgens leading to PCOS.)^[35] excessive release of LH (luteinizing hormone) by the anterior lobe of pituitary gland,^[36] obesity (adipose tissue contains an enzyme, which converts androstenedione to estrone and testosterone to estradiol, namely aromatase. The excess of adipose tissue in obese women creates a condition where both androgens and estrogen are in excess which inturn leads to excessive hairs on the body and inhibition of follicle stimulating hormone by negative feedback of estrogen.).^[36] Stress is also a major culprit for the occurrence of PCOS.^[37] In countries like India, from a study undertaken in Lucknow, UP the major reason which lead to PCOS is the abdominal obesity.^[12] From another study which took place in a residential college in Andhra Pradesh the main culprit of PCOS was found to be hyperandrogenism.^[11] from another study which was conducted in Andhra Pradesh the reasons which lead to PCOS are found to be obesity, less or no physical activity, large hip to waist ratio, family history of diabetes mellitus (9%), hypertension (9%), hypothyroidism (9%), irregular dietary pattern, environmental factors, heredity which include early age of sexual maturation, family history of PCOS, premature fetal development, hyperinsulinemia, insulin resistance. PCOS has been observed more in the urban population as compared to that of rural population. A sudden weight gain has been observed in the PCOS females over a period of three months.^[38] In countries like Pakistan, a study conducted in The Aga Khan University Hospital, and Concept Fertility Centre, Karachi, Pakistan, between the period of January 2003 to December 2004 and the major cause of PCOS was found to be hyperinsulinemia.^[15] From another study conducted in the Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan between the time period of 2 years which is from January 2005 to December 2006, the other leading causes of PCOS in Pakistan are found to be obesity, BMI greater than 30, increased waist to hip ratio, intrafamily marriages, insulin resistance, increased acanthosis nigrican (black or brown velvety patches on the skin)^{[39][40]} Another study was conducted in the King Edward Medical University and associated Mayo Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan, from June 2009 to May 2010, the leading causes of PCOS there are found to be increased LH-FSH (luteinizing hormone and follicle stimulating hormone) ratio, increased levels of testosterone and androstenedione and prolactin.^[41] Moving to Bangladesh, the leading causes of PCOS are found to be central obesity (81.4%), lipid abnormalities (dyslipidemia 45.7%), and glucose intolerance (47.1%), increased prolactin level (18.6%), increased thyroid function (11.4%), hypertension (24.3%), hirutism (88.6%), metabolic syndrome (15.3%).^[42] In other countries like Nepal, the major reasons for the widespread of PCOS are insulin resistance, hyperinsulinemia, hyperandrogenism and anovulation.^[17] Reasons like hyperinsulinemia, obesity, insulin resistance, heredity, hyperandrogenaemia, hypothyroidism, hyperlipidaemia, diabetes mellitus type 2 are most common in the region of Myanmar.^{[43][44]} The causes of PCOS in China are found to be obesity, heredity, hormonal imbalance, insulin resistance.^{[45][46]} Heredity and environmental factors are considered as the culprit behind the wide spreading of PCOS

in Sri Lanka. ^[47] In countries like Thailand, increased obesity, increased BMI, increased waist to hip ratio are the reasons behind the prevalence of PCOS. ^[48] In Asia, after a number of studies the major reasons behind the cause of PCOS are obesity, increased BMI, increased waist to hip ratio, environmental factors, and lesser sex hormone binding globulin, insulin resistance and heredity. ^[49] In European countries, insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, hypertension, dyslipidemia, glucose intolerance and diabetes are the reasons behind PCOS. ^[50] Overweight and heredity are the causes of PCOS in Australia. ^[51] In South Africa, family history, environmental and genetic factors are the leading cause of PCOS. Apart from these, insulin resistance and hyperandrogenism are also the reasons behind the prevalence of PCOS in Africa. ^[52] In USA, obesity, environment, heredity, eating patterns, insulin resistance are the causes of PCOS. ^[49] Globally, it can be concluded that eating patterns, lack of physical activity, hyperlipidaemia, insulin resistance, obesity, family history and heredity are the major causes leading for the wide spread of PCOS across the globe.

Conclusion

From the above review of literature, it has been found that PCOS is found globally irrespective of the area and climatic conditions. PCOS can be checked with the primary symptoms like marked decrease in the female characters. Other symptoms like irregular or no menstruation, excess hairs on face, chest, stomach, thumbs, or toes, decrease in breast size, hair loss, acne, depression, weight gain, pelvic pain and infertility. Obesity, insulin resistance, less or no physical activity, imbalanced diet, heredity, hyperlipidaemia, hypothyroidism and hyperinsulinemia are the culprits behind the wide spread prevalence of PCOS. The ill effects of the disease can be minimized by having proper medications and managing dietary intakes and patterns. PCOS is a life style disorder and medications like metformin is useful in infertility. Along with metformin, oral contraceptives help in improving acne and hirsutism. Loss of weight is also helpful in minimizing the effects of PCOS. Diet therapy along with exercise proves to be beneficial in PCOS. Following weight loss diets help in normalizing the female hormones and thus reducing the insulin resistance thus leading towards the cure of PCOS. A low carbohydrate diet is prescribed with moderate essential fatty acids and good amount of protein. A diet of 1200 to 1500 Kcal/day is prescribed depending upon the conditions. Complex carbohydrates are given and simple ones like juice, sugar, malt syrups are avoided. Processed foods like pasta, bread, sugary products, seed oils, Trans fats are also avoided. Protein rich foods like non-vegetarian products (beef, chicken, lamb, fish, salmon, eggs) are given. Fruits and vegetables like apple, orange, broccoli, spinach, pears, blueberries, strawberries, carrots, cauliflowers are given. Fat products like coconut oil, nuts, yogurt, cheese, butter, olive oil are also given. In case of hyperlipidaemia, oil and fat products are to be avoided and omega 3 and omega 6 and omega 9 fatty acids are to be taken. Vitamin D supplementation is done so as to increase fertility. The person need to restrict fried and oily food. All this is to be done along with physical activity of atleast half an hour or more per day as required. Concentrating of eating patterns and physical activity reduces the risk of PCOS.

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