

Systematic review on the relationship between the use of oral contraceptives and Vulvovaginal Atrophy (VVA): Effects, symptoms and implications on the quality of life of patients



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ABSTRACT

Vulvovaginal atrophy (AVV) is a frequent condition in the postmenopausal period and has been associated with the use of oral contraceptives due to the disruptions in hormone levels that these medications can cause. However, the amount of data available on this relationship is limited due to underreporting of cases.

Keywords: Vulvovaginal atrophy, AVV.

1 INTRODUCTION

Vulvovaginal atrophy (AVV) is a frequent condition in the postmenopausal period and has been associated with the use of oral contraceptives due to the disruptions in hormone levels that these medications can cause. However, the amount of data available on this relationship is limited due to underreporting of cases.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this systematic review is to examine the relationship between the use of oral contraceptives and the occurrence of VVA in women, emphasizing the importance of investigating this condition beyond the postmenopausal period. In addition, we intend to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to support or refute the association between oral contraceptives and VVA, considering their negative impact on patients' quality of life, including issues related to sexual isolation and psychosocial factors.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted consisted of a systematic review of articles published between 2013 and 2023, obtained through the databases "Pubmed" and "Science Direct". Publications in English and Portuguese were considered.



4 RESULTS

The results of this study indicate a correlation between the use of oral contraceptives and the occurrence of AVV, because of the hormones present in these medications. The decrease in estrogen levels and the absence of the progesterone peak, resulting from the use of contraceptives, are factors that contribute to anatomical and histological changes in the vaginal region. This results in a reduction in the thickness of the vaginal tissue, making it dry, less elastic, and more fragile. Common symptoms of AVV include shortening of the vaginal canal, discharge, dyspareunia, and sinusorrhagia.

5 CONCLUSION

This systematic review revealed an association between the use of oral contraceptives and the development of AVV, however, the lack of adequate notification of cases limits the study and knowledge of women about adverse effects. It is important to invest in additional research to deepen the understanding of this correlation and inform women about the possible consequences of long-term use of oral contraceptives.



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