

HAEMOPHILUS DUCREYI IN ASYMPTOMATIC PROSTITUTES

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Summary

A study of 50 prostitutes from Agra city, showed that while only one of them had chancroid ulcer; on culture *H. ducreyi* was isolated from 17 of them. *H. ducreyi* was isolated from cervix in 6 cases, from vagina in 7 while in four subjects the organism was isolated from both the sites. Vaginitis (27) was the main complaint.

Chancroid is an uncommon disease in Western countries, and a fall in its incidence has been noted in the period 1943 to 1973¹. But this disease still occupies an important place in the list of sexually transmitted diseases in Asian population. Khoo et al² considered the prostitutes as the likely source of infection, specially because the chancroid may be asymptomatic in women or the infection may present only as mild vaginitis³. The present study was done to find out the prevalence rate of the causative agent of chancroid among a population of prostitutes.

Materials and Methods

Fifty unselected prostitutes living in the thick of the city of Agra were

the subject of this study. The women were examined clinically. Swabs were taken from vagina and cervix and smears were prepared. Definite diagnosis was made after specimens were found to be positive in culture as described by Borchardt and Hotze⁴. The age of the subjects varied between 20 to 50 years with the maximum number of 18 in the age group of 25-30 years.

Results

On the basis of smear and culture findings, *Hemophilus Ducreyi* (*H. Ducreyi*) was identified in seventeen women. The organism was isolated from vagina in 7 cases, cervix in 6 and from both vagina and cervix in 4 of them (Table 1). Out of these subjects, only one had a chancroid ulcer, 27 had copious vaginal discharge and 11 had secondary syphilis. (Table 1).

Discussion

Chancroid is diagnosed more frequently in men than in women, since it is usually asymptomatic in the latter. Of the 1196 cases reported in the United States during 1972, 73% were in men¹. *H. ducreyi* were cultured from penile ulcers of about 1200 males

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TABLE 1
Clinical and Laboratory Findings on
50 Prostitutes

	No. of Cases	H. Ducreyi Identified From—		
		Cervix	Vagina	Both
Vaginitis	27	4	5	2
Primary Syphilis	7	—	1	—
Secondary Syphilis	18	1	1	1
Molluscum				
Contagiosum	9	1	—	—
L. G. V.	3	—	—	—
Venereal Warts	3	—	—	—
Herpes Genitalis	3	—	—	—
Chancroid Ulcer	1	—	—	1

and history revealed that the most likely sources of infection were the prostitutes (unpublished data from Singapore²). In the present study, 34% of the prostitutes were harbouring the organism. None of these women sought medical advice and predominant symptom was discharge from vagina. Chancroid was detected only in one case. Thus, these almost-asymptomatic prostitutes may serve as consistent unsuspected sources of infection for the

male customers, who are more likely to manifest the disease. The absence of typical clinical manifestations of the disease in a large number of prostitutes even in presence of the organism makes bacteriological study of these women essential, whenever an attempt is made to check them for presence of S. T. D.

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