
Protective Effect of a Traditional Practice Against Cervix Cancer in Kerala

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ABSTRACT Cancer of the uterine cervix is one of the most frequent types of malignancy seen among females. One sixth of female cancer patients belong to this group in Kerala. A case control study on the etiology of cervix cancer was conducted at Amala Cancer Hospital, Thrissur, Kerala. Two hundred cervix cancer patients and equal numbers of matching controls were included in the study. Gynecological and sex related habits were included in the questionnaire. All are interviewed with the help of a female investigator. During this study a social practice regarding the pregnancy and delivery is analysed. This is the traditional practice of the people that the pregnant women are cared at their paternal house during the late pregnancy and early months after delivery (postpartum). This reduces the chances of sexual act during this period. Many authors have reported that the carcinogenic agent for the cervical epithelium is a sperm factor that sensitizes cell and initiates the neoplastic process. Any reason, which reduces sexual activity during the epochs of cervical cellular activity, has a protective effect against cervix cancer. Ninety four percent of cancer patients have reported that they had intercourse during last trimester of pregnancy (only 7% of controls). Similarly 92% of patients reported that they sexual intercourse during early months of postpartum (only 13% of controls). This study shows the reduction in the sexual activity during late pregnancy and early postpartum gives a protection against cervix cancer.

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