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CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE COVID-19 PERIOD: PERINEAL HEALTH CLINIC PERSPECTIVE

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Objective

To review the short- and long-term management and outcomes of women who sustained an obstetric anal sphincter injury (OASI) during covid pandemic period. Design A retrospective case note review was carried out comparing care against local and national guidance(1).

Method

113 women with coded OASI between November 2020 to November 2022 at a District General Hospital.

Results

The total incidence of OASI noted to be 1.3%. Of which, 64% patients had an unassisted vaginal birth, 30% had a forceps and 4.4% ventouse delivery and 1% had a vaginal breech. The category of OASI were as follows: 50% had a 3A tear, 35% 3B, 8% 3C and 8% of women sustained a 4th degree tear. 91% were discharged with oral antibiotics and laxatives. 63% women were reviewed by the colorectal nurse specialist in a perineal health clinic, a further 19 women (17%) did not attend. Due to COVID-19 pandemic the follow up was conducted over the telephone. 30% of women were symptomatic at 3 months. Only 2 women were recorded as symptomatic at 6 months. Only 56% women attended a women's health physiotherapy. Quarter of the women failed to attend their physiotherapy sessions.

Conclusions

Despite the postnatal counselling and advice received by the obstetricians and midwives following the repair, follow up fell below the 100% target set by the RCOG as only 80% received colorectal nurse follow up and 56% a physiotherapy review. This was attributed due to varying policies regarding face-to-face attendance, referral systems differing depending on postcode and lack of engagement from postnatal women with tele clinics. In order to improve the services, the trust recovery strategy invested in appointing a pelvic obstetric and gynaecological physiotherapist along with an obstetrician with special interest. The team have redesigned the services and streamlined the pathways.

Reference

RCOG The Management of Third- and Fourth-Degree Perineal Tears. Green top Guideline No. 29. June 2015