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RESEARCH ARTICLE

VAGINAL DISCHARGE: WOMEN'S HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOURS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Early detection of pathological vaginal discharge is important to prevent complications of underlying diseases which can severely compromise women's health, fertility and survival. A review of the published literature was performed to describe health seeking behaviours and cultural practices related to vaginal discharge among women in reproductive age group. This review involved searching databases using the search terms such as vaginal symptoms/ discharge, reproductive disorders, health seeking, self-management. Twenty six original articles which included in to the study were regarding reproductive tract infections involving women aged 15 to 49 years and published in English between 1990 and 2014. The most commonly reported reproductive tract symptom was vaginal discharge. Majority of women consider stress, body weakness, poor personal hygiene, body heat, eating hot foods and bad luck as causes for vaginal discharge. Women's lack of knowledge regarding the causes leads to inability in differentiating normality of vaginal discharge. Many women expressed that embarrassment, anxiety and shame related to disclosing vaginal discharge leads to use of variety of home remedies. Women's lack of knowledge on the pathological vaginal discharge and use of different cultural practices make them delay in seeking medical advice for pathological vaginal discharge. Culture specific health education programmes and strategies need to be designed to provide effective health care towards prevention of consequences of untreated pathological vaginal discharge.

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