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Long term follow-up study of women with PCOS

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Introduction

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is the most common endocrine disorder in women. Because of the ovulatory defect and the metabolic alterations the chance of spontaneous conception is reduced and the miscarriage rates have been reported to be significantly higher. However, there are only a few long terms follow-up studies, based on modern PCOS diagnostic criteria.

Objectives

The aim of this study was to compare reproductive history and ultrasonographic findings in PCOS patients, 40 years or older, who received their diagnosis 10-18 years earlier, with age-matched controls.

Methods

79 PCOS patients and 81 age-matched control women have thus far been included in the study. All subjects attended a gynaecological and clinical examination, and filled out a questionnaire on reproductive health.

Results

Among women who had attempted to become pregnant, 87.0 % of PCOS patients and 91.5 % of controls had given birth to a child. Among PCOS patients, 73.8 % had given birth to at least one child following a spontaneous conception. The rate of spontaneous abortions was similar among PCOS patients and controls (1.2 vs. 0.9 spontaneous abortions, respectively). Pre-menopausal PCOS patients without hormonal contraception reported 9.1 menstruations during the last year, while control subjects reported 11.1 menstrual periods during the last year, $p < 0.05$. The number of PCOS patients who had 8 or more menstrual periods during the last year was 71.1 %. Mean ovarian volume and number of antral follicles in PCOS patients were significantly greater than in control women, 9.0 ml compared to 6.1 ml ($p < 0.001$) and 10.4 compared to 5.0 ($p < 0.001$), respectively.

Conclusion

Most women with PCOS have given birth and the rate of spontaneous pregnancies was relatively high. PCOS patients appear not to have an increased risk for spontaneous abortion. Together with the ultrasound findings, this could imply that PCOS patients have a good fecundity, and an ovarian reserve possibly superior to women with normal ovaries.