

Madlin R.M.

A CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY ON POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS

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Relevance. Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is one of the most common endocrine disorders. It is characterized by ovulatory dysfunction, hyperandrogenism, and polycystic ovarian morphology. PCOS is highly prevalent in South Asia, with India and Sri Lanka facing significant burdens, particularly among urban, reproductive-aged women. Studies show that PCOS prevalence in these regions is often higher than in Western countries, with estimates frequently ranging between 3.7% to 36% in India and around 6.3% in Sri Lanka. Early diagnosis of PCOS significantly improve overall well-being by mitigating metabolic, reproductive and psychological complications across life span.

Aim: to assess the prevalence of PCOS symptoms and level of awareness among students, with a particular focus on students from India and Sri Lanka.

Materials and methods. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among students through questionnaire that primarily focused on general and lifestyle (smoking, frequency of physical activity, sleep duration and frequency of consumption of carbonated drinks) characteristics. Furthermore, information on menstrual profile was collected (age of menarche, average length of the cycle, menstrual cycle's regularity, and its impact on academic performance) as well as PCOS related symptoms: hirsutism (assessed using Ferriman - Gallwey score), androgenic alopecia (with Ludwig score), acne, patches of dark skin, impaired glucose tolerance.

Results and their discussion. Data of 42 students was collected with median age 22,0 (21,0- 23,5) years with median age of menarche 13,0 (12,0-16,0) years out of which students from India and Sri Lanka – 83.4% and other nationality 16.8%. Mostly comprised medical students - 78.6% and other field students 21.4%. Most were non-smokers - 90.5%. The frequency of physical activity: only 16.7% - daily, 9.5% - 4-6 times a week, 50% - 1-3 times a week and 23.8% - never. Sleeping hours: only 7.1% slept more than 8 hours, 71.4% - 6-8 hours and 21.4% less than 6 hours. Fast food consumption: 9.8% - daily, 85.4% - 1-3 times a week and only 2.4% - never. Carbonated drink frequency: 2.4% - daily, 2.4% - 4-6 times per week, 56.1% - 1-3 times per week and 39% - never. Irregular menstrual cycle was found in 19.5%, where as 76.3% reported a normal menstrual cycle length (21-35 days). 22.5% reported that menstrual irregularities have affected their academic performance. PCOS-related symptoms: hirsutism - 35% with median Ferriman-Gallwey score is 7 (4-9) and more than 67.5% have never heard about Ferriman-Gallwey score. Alopecia stage 1 (Ludwig scale) – 45.2%, acne – 34.1%, dark patches of the skin – 35.7%. 33.3% have done ultrasound of ovaries in which 18.8% have multifollicular morphology of ovaries. 21.6% have impaired glucose tolerance. PCOS was mentioned to 28.9% of students by their medical practitioner.

Conclusions. Among the students 28.9% were told by a medical practitioner they have PCOS, despite a high prevalence of clinical signs in our respondents: hirsutism (35%), acne (34.1%), alopecia (45.2% - stage 1), and dark skin patches (35.7%). Awareness of PCOS diagnostic tools was very low: 67.5% - had never heard of the Ferriman-Gallwey score, even though most (78.6%) of participants were medical students. Overall, the survey reveals a significant gap between PCOS symptoms and level of awareness among young students, highlighting the need for better educational intervention, screening, and lifestyle modification.