Abstract

Experimental, clinical, and epidemiological evidence strongly suggests that genital Human Papillomaviruses (HPVs) are predominantly sexually transmitted. Epidemiological studies in virginal and HPV-negative women clearly indicate that sexual intercourse is virtually a necessary step for acquiring HPV. As with any other sexually transmitted disease (STD) men are implicated in the epidemiological chain of the infection. Penile HPVs are predominantly acquired through sexual contacts. Sexual contacts with women who are prostitutes play an important role in HPV transmission and in some populations sex workers may become an important reservoir of high-risk HPVs. Acting both as carriers and vectors of oncogenic HPVs male partners may markedly contribute to the risk of developing cervical cancer in their female partners. Thus, in the absence of screening programs, a woman's risk of cervical cancer may depend less on her own sexual behavior than on that of her husband or other male partners. Although more rarely than women, men may also become the victims of their own HPV infections as a fraction of infected men are at an increased risk of developing penile and anal cancers. Male circumcision status has been shown to reduce the risk not only of acquiring and transmitting genital HPVs but also of cervical cancer in their female partners. More research is needed to better understand the natural history and epidemiology of HPV infections in men. This paper is available too at: http://www.insp.mx/salud/index.html

Keywords

cervix neoplasms; human papillomavirus; sexually transmitted infections; male role.