Girls With PCOS Prone to CVD, Diabetes

BY ALICE GOODMAN

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS

WASHINGTON – Girls and young women with polycystic ovary syndrome appear to share common features that include obesity, a strong family history of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and acanthosis nigricans, according to a retrospective case series from researchers at Howard University Hospital in Washington.

"These findings are not new, but they are striking, considering how common they were," said lead author Dr. Lisa Green.

"For example, more than two-thirds of adolescents with PCOS [polycystic ovary syndrome] were found to have acanthosis nigricans, which is a marker of hyperinsulinemia."

If uncorrected, hyperinsulinemia may leads to type 2 diabetes in these patients, said Dr. Green.

"The findings underline the importance of recognizing and treating PCOS in adolescents, who are predisposed to developing type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, endometrial hyperplasia, and cancer," Dr. Green said at the meeting.

"Parents of adolescents known to have PCOS should be counseled appropriately regarding these risks," she added.

PCOS is a common disorder, occurring in 5%-10% of all females aged 12-45 years, she noted, but the causes are unknown, and the diagnosis is based on clinical findings.

"The diagnosis of polycystic ovary syndrome is more difficult or delayed in the adolescent population because clinical findings, such as irregular menstrual cycles and acne, are normal among this population," Dr. Green said in an interview.

The study identified 24 females aged 9-19 years who were diagnosed with PCOS between 2007 and 2009 using the Rotterdam criteria: 71% had acanthosis nigricans, 75% had a family history of type 2 diabetes mellitus, 71% had a family history of cardiovascular disease, and 87% had body mass index greater than 26 kg/m^2.

The study is limited by its size and lack of control group. Dr. Green and her colleagues plan to conduct future studies to validate the strength of their observations.

"Knowing that adolescents with PCOS have significant underlying risk factors for type 2 diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular disease makes it imperative that we conduct additional studies to ascertain if treatment with insulin-sensitizing agents and the like will decrease their risk of subsequently developing diabetes," according to senior author Dr. Diana Broomfield.

"If so, then it would be more prudent to treat them with these drugs, rather than simply to put then on oral contraceptive pills for menstrual cycle management," she said. ■

VITALS

Major Finding: Seventy-one percent of the females with PCOS had acanthosis nigricans, 75% had a family history of type 2 diabetes, 71% had a family history of cardiovascular disease, and 87% had a BMI greater than 26 kg/m^2.

Data Source: A retrospective case series of 24 PCOS patients aged 9-19 years.

Disclosures: Dr. Green and Dr. Broomfield said they had no relevant financial disclosures.

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