Musculoskeletal pain associated with endometriosis: an observational study

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Introduction: Endometriosis is a frequent disease, affecting more than 10% of women. Most frequent symptoms are gynecologic, with dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia, dysuria, chronic pelvic pain, or dysfertylity. Nevertheless, some case reports described musculoskeletal (MS) symptoms. We aimed to report MS pain in a sample of women diagnosed with endometriosis.

Patients and Methods: Observational study in Center of Endometriosis of Hospital Paris St Joseph. Women consulting for endometriosis were proposed to complete a questionnaire concerning the presence of MS pain. Questions concerned successively; general health history, endometriosis history, existence of MS pain. If MS were notified, other questions aimed to describe pain intensity on visual analogic scale (VAS), painful location, analgesic intake, rheumatologic diagnosis.

Results: In all, 104 women with endometriosis completed the questionnaire. Mean age was 32.6 years; mean body mass index was 28.6 kg/m²; depressive symptoms affected 17% of women. Mean endometriosis duration was 4.07 years; 13.4% of women already consulted a rheumatologist, and 2.9% were diagnosed with fibromyalgia. MS pain were reported by 79 women (77%), with an intensity of 6.5/10 on VAS. In 64% of women, antalgic treatment was necessary for MS pain. The most frequent location of MS pain was lumbar area (82%). Except for 4 patients, MS pain concerned more than one area. MS pain appeared before, after or concomitantly with pelvic endometriosis symptoms.

Discussion: MS pain were frequent in this sample of women with endometriosis. MS pain were intense, and frequently required analgesic drugs. Lumbar location was the most frequent painful location. The main question concerns the cause of these MS pain: is it the projection of a painful area pelvic endometriosis, a specific MS location of endometriotic nodule, or an inflammatory rheumatism not yet investigated? For rheumatologist, unexplained MS pain have to make consider endometriosis, by asking about the catamenial rhythm of pain, because it could be the inaugural symptom of endometriosis. A specific rheumatologist consultation for endometriotic women was created in our endometriosis Reference center, in order to understand the origin of these MS pain.

Keywords: Musculoskeletal pain; endometriosis

Authors:
Beranger Sophie 1, Agnès Portier 2, Marie Ceccarelli 3, Astrid Mephon 3, Delphine Lhuillery 4, Eric Sauvanet 3, Erick Petit 1,
1. Imagery Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO, Paris Saint Joseph Hospital, Paris, FRANCE
2. Rheumatology department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO, Paris Saint Joseph Hospital, Paris, FRANCE
3. Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO, Paris Saint Joseph Hospital, Paris, FRANCE
4. Pain Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO, Paris Saint Joseph Hospital, Paris, FRANCE

Authors (raw format)
Beranger Sophie - email: sberanger@hpsj.fr Institution: Paris Saint Joseph Hospital Department: Imagery Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO City: Paris Country: FRANCE Speaker: Yes
Portier Agnès - email: aportier@hpsj.fr Institution: Paris Saint Joseph Hospital Department: Rheumatology department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO City: Paris Country: FRANCE Speaker: No
Ceccarelli Marie - email: mariececcarelli@yahoo.fr Institution: Paris Saint Joseph Hospital Department: Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO City: Paris Country: FRANCE Speaker: No
Mephon Astrid - email: amephon@hpsj.fr Institution: Paris Saint Joseph Hospital Department: Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO City: Paris Country: FRANCE Speaker: No
Lhuillery Delphine - email: d.lhuillery.cristin@free.fr Institution: Paris Saint Joseph Hospital Department: Pain Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO City: Paris Country: FRANCE Speaker: No
Sauvanet Eric - email: esauvanet@hpsj.fr Institution: Paris Saint Joseph Hospital Department: Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO City: Paris Country: FRANCE Speaker: No
Petit Erick - email: epetit@hpsj.fr Institution: Paris Saint Joseph Hospital Department: Imagery Department; Endometriosis Center; RESENDO City: Paris Country: FRANCE Speaker: No