

DOI: 10.5152/TurkThoracJ.2019.99

[Abstract:0810] MS-139 [Accepted: Oral Presentation] [Tobacco Control]

The Relationship Between Smoking and Sexual Function in Pregnancy

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Objectives: Smoking during pregnancy is a risk factor of maternal and fetal morbidity. Studies show that the prevalence of smoking in pregnant women is about 20-45%. Smoking during pregnancy was found to be risk of ectopic pregnancy, placenta previa, and preterm delivery. It was reported that smoking has negative effects on vascular system which was related to sexual health. Smoking was associated with lubrication and orgasmic dysfunction in women, however pathophysiological mechanisms have not been clarified yet. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between smoking and sexual function in pregnancy.

Methods: 84 pregnant women without any medical and obstetric complications for sexual activity were included in this study. The sexual response cycle and satisfaction of sexuality were assessed by using Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) and Visual Analogue Scale (VAS), respectively.

Results: The mean total FSFI score of the cases was 21.45 ± 6.18 and the mean satisfaction of sexuality was 4.7 ± 1.9 . The smoking dose (pack-years) and the severity of dyspareunia showed positive correlation ($r=0.367$, $p<0.05$). Sexual desire and sexual arousal were correlated negatively with the smoking dose ($r=-0.268$, $p<0.05$, $r=-0.260$, $p<0.05$).

Conclusion: The results of this study reveals that smoking has associated with dyspareunia and sexual desire in pregnancy. Smoking may reduce female genital blood flow during sexual activity. Thus decrease in lubrication and sexual desire were caused by smoking because of reduced genital blood flow. There is a need for further studies with larger sample sizes in order to reveal the pathophysiological mechanisms of smoking on sexual function in pregnant women.

Keywords: Smoking, sexual dysfunction, pregnancy