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OPEN PEER REVIEW

Clinico-Etiological Aspects of Patients Suffering from Genital Lesions: A Cross-Sectional Study from India

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About this report

This open peer review (OPR) report shows the public comments made on this article during peer review, by the reviewers, the associate editor and the editor-in-chief, for every revision round, together with the authors' replies. Comments appear only with the consent of the people who wrote them. Reviewers who chose to sign their report are named; the others are shown as "Referee". Comments are edited for language only, and confidential remarks to the editors are not included.

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1 Original submission

3 comments · 7 Jan 2024 – 10 Jan 2024

Referee 1 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 7 Jan 2024

Dear authors,
I appreciate the time and effort you put into this study. You investigated genital lesions in some patients who came to your hospital. The topic is relatively novel, interesting, and within the journal's scope. In my opinion, your manuscript can be accepted for publication after major revision. Please address my comments:
Title and abstract
1-The title is too long and boring. I suggest writing "Clinico-etiological aspects of patients suffering from genital lesion: A cross-sectional study from India".
2-In the Method section, please mention the precise place and time of the study. Please mention the data collection instrument. Also, I think the last two sentences that reported statistical features of your study are excessive and can be omitted.
3-The result section should be presented in a more organized manner. Please revise it.
4-In the Conclusion, the last sentence about monitoring the CD4 count is outside the study objective. Please omit it.
Method
5-Please mention the precise time of the study in the method section.
6-Please clarify the inclusion and exclusion criteria.
7-Was your study based on sampling or the census method? If it was based on sampling, please explain how the sample size was estimated and describe the sampling method in the method section. If it was based on the census method, please mention this.
8-How did you diagnose the etiology of genital lesions? This information should be added to the method section.
Result
9-I strongly recommend adding a table reporting the characteristics of your cases by number, including age, sex, predisposing factors, clinical manifestations, diagnoses, and treatment.
Language
10-The manuscript requires language editing. I recommend consulting an English editor to improve grammar, punctuation, fluency, and general style.
Best regards

Associate Editor

MAJOR REVISION 10 Jan 2024

Dear EIC,
Thanks to the authors and appreciation to the researchers. The manuscript presents valuable research. But some revisions are needed. The authors should revise it based on the comments. Also, a minor change should be made to the abstract:
The study design should be mentioned in the first line of the method section of the ABSTRACT.

Editor-in-Chief MAJOR REVISION 10 Jan 2024

Dear Author,
Thank you for submitting the article. It needs some revision. Please revise it based on the reviewers' and AE's comments.

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Revision 1

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Reply to reviewers

Thank you very much for your valuable suggestions. We have revised the manuscript accordingly. Please find below comment-wise responses.

Reviewer 1:

Title and abstract

1-The title is too long and boring. I suggest writing "Clinico-etiological aspects of patients suffering from genital lesion: A cross-sectional study from India".
R- The title has been changed as suggested.

2-Method section, please mention the precise place and time of the study. Please mention data collection instrument. Also, I think the last two sentences that reported statistical features of your study are excessive and can be omitted.
R- Place and time of study have been mentioned as:
This was a hospital-based cross-sectional observational study conducted at a tertiary hospital in Pune, India in the departments of Dermatology and Pediatrics over a period of two months (July –August 2022).

The last two sentences have been omitted as suggested.

3-The result section should be presented with more organized pattern. Please revise it.
R- The result section has been revised as:
83 patients comprised 77 adults, 3 (3.6%) pediatric and adolescents each and 15 (18.1%) HIV-seropositive individuals. Adult male-to-female ratio was 1.2:1. Mean age of adults was 37.01±14.57 years. The most common STI and non-STI lesions were herpes genitalis and tinea cruris, respectively, with similar trend in HIV-seropositive group. All three pediatric cases had non-STI lesions, while 66.7% adolescents had STIs (vulvovaginal candidiasis and genital warts). Overall, there was a slightly higher preponderance of non-STI lesions (53.75%), and the majority of patients had lesions of infectious nature (86.25%). The most common identifiable risk factor was lack of circumcision (51.25%), followed by unprotected sexual intercourse (22.5%). The presence of risk factors was significantly associated with male gender ($p = 0.0001$).

4-Conclusion, the last sentence about monitoring the CD4 count is out of study objective. Please omit it.
R- The sentence has been omitted as suggested.

Methods

5-Please mention the precise time of the study in the method section.
R- The precise time of the study has been mentioned as: “This hospital-based cross-sectional observational study was conducted at a tertiary care hospital in Pune, Maharashtra State, India over a two-month period from July to August 2022.”

6-Please clarify the inclusion and exclusion criteria.
R- Inclusion criteria: All patients presenting with genital lesions to the departments of Dermatology and Pediatrics during the study period with written informed consent were included in the study.
Exclusion criteria: Patients without written informed consent were excluded.

7-Did you study perform based on the sampling or census method. If it was based on sampling, please add how to estimate sample size and sampling method in the method section. If it was based on census method, please mention this issue.
R- Sampling was done based on census method (Convenience sampling).

8-How did you diagnose the etiology of genital lesions? It should be added to the method section.
R- Clinical examinations were conducted, followed by relevant microbiological, serological and histopathological investigations, and the final diagnoses of genital lesions were made by one of the investigators (second author, Associate Professor in the Department of Dermatology). The same has been added to the methods section.

Results

9-I strongly recommend adding a table reporting characteristics of your cases per number, including, age, sex, predisposing factors, clinical manifestations, diagnoses, and treatment.
R- The following table has been added to results section:

Table-5: Summary of characteristics of cases per number, including age, gender, risk factors, symptoms and examination findings

Age Group (years)	**Total (%)**
12-20	5 (6.3%)
21-30	30 (37.5%)
31-40	18 (22.5%)
41-50	13 (16.3%)
51-60	7 (8.8%)
>60	7 (8.8%)

Gender	
Male	44 (55%)
Female	36 (45%)
Risk factors	
Lack of circumcision	41 (51.25%)
Unprotected penovaginal intercourse	17 (21.25%)
HIV Seropositivity	15 (18.75%)
Multiple sexual partners	7 (8.75%)
Symptomatic partner	7 (8.75%)
Poor personal hygiene	7 (8.75%)
Diabetes Mellitus	6 (7.5%)
High risk occupation (Driver)	4 (5%)
Addictions	3 (3.75%)
Unprotected anal intercourse	1 (1.25%)
Symptoms	
Pruritus	40 (50%)
Asymptomatic lesions	13 (16.25%)
Whitish vaginal discharge	12 (15%)
Pain	9 (11.25%)
Ulcer	9 (11.25%)
Dysuria	7 (8.75%)
Purulent urethral discharge	4 (5%)
Fluid filled lesion	4 (5%)
Painful erection	1 (1.25%)
Bloody urethral discharge	1 (1.25%)
Bleeding on scratching	1 (1.25%)
Burning sensation	1 (1.25%)
Examination findings	
Ulcer	17 (21.25%)
Papules	13 (16.25%)
Annular hyperpigmented plaque with scaling	12 (15%)
Vaginal discharge	9 (11.25%)
Erythema	8 (10%)
Erosions	6 (7.5%)
Hyperpigmented plaque	5 (6.25%)
Tenderness	5 (6.25%)
Excoriations	4(5%)
Nodules	3 (3.75%)
Verrucous growth	3 (3.75%)
Hypopigmentation	2 (2.5%)

Urethral discharge	2 (2.5%)
Phimosis	2 (2.5%)
Eczematization	1 (1.25%)
Keloid	1(1.25%)
Vaginal stenosis	1(1.25%)

Treatment given for these lesions is beyond the scope of the objectives of this study.

Language

10-The manuscript requires language edition. I recommend consulting an English editor to improve grammar, punctuation, fluency, and general style.
R- The manuscript has been double-checked and extensively edited for all language errors including grammar, punctuation, fluency, and general style. Requisite corrections have been made and highlighted in the revised manuscript.

Associate Editor's Comments:

Associate Editor 1:
Study design should be mentioned in first line of method section of ABSTRACT
R- The study design has been mentioned as:
This was a hospital-based cross-sectional observational study conducted at a tertiary hospital in Pune, India in the departments of Dermatology and Pediatrics over a period of two months (July –August 2022).

2 Revision 1

3 comments · 31 Jan 2024 – 31 Jan 2024

Referee 1 Reviewer

ACCEPT 31 Jan 2024

Acceptable

Associate Editor

ACCEPT 31 Jan 2024

Dear EIC,
I reviewed the manuscript again. The great effort in improving the manuscript is highly appreciated.
The authors have addressed all comments.
Thank you

Editor-in-Chief

ACCEPT 31 Jan 2024

Dear Author,
Your revisions have significantly improved the article, and it is now deemed acceptable for publication.
Congratulations on your hard work and dedication to enhancing the quality of your work.