News Roundup

Lactobacillus and thrush prevention

A randomised controlled trial1 has dashed the hope that eating, or putting preparations of Lactobacillus, could prevent post-vaginal delivery thrush.

The study published in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology1 recruited women aged 18–50 years with non-antibiotic vulvovaginitis. The study recruited women the past month, were pregnant or had used vaginal antifungal agents within the past month, were pregnant or had used vaginal antifungal agents within the past month.

The trial used a 2 × 2 factorial design to test:

(a) an oral powder, Lacto® (containing Lactobacillus rhamnosus and Bifidobacterium longum) against placebo (maltodextrin powder) and

(b) a vaginal pessary, Femilac® (containing L. rhamnosus, L. delbrueckii, L. acidophilus and Streptococcus thermophilus) against placebo (maltodextrin).

Active treatments and placebos were identical in appearance.

The authors point out that it seems unlikely that oral administration of lactobacillus could be helpful in the short term. The lactobacillus would have to survive gastric acid and competition from other gut bacteria and, in this case, the antibiotic taken as well. Also, lactobacilli exhibit host specificity and colonisation potential, so that not all lactobacillus can colonise the gut or the vagina. Lactobacillus pessaries are also affected by antibiotics.

So the advice has to be that patients susceptible to thrush after taking antibiotics should use conventional antifungal medication, not yogurt or other probiotics containing lactobacilli.

Sexual health recommendations

Dr Sue Donym should take a break – as she is clearly overwhelmed by current initiatives from the Department of Health and to let those of us who still have the energy, optimism and vision take charge to improve the nation’s sexual health.

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Sexual health delivery in general practice

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