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Haemophilus influenzae Bartholinitis

Haemophilus influenzae has recently been recognized as an important cause of infection in adults. Among extrapulmonary infections, genital infections have scarcely been reported, although recent studies have considered *Haemophilus* species to be potential pathogens in genitourinary infections including bartholinitis (1, 2). *Haemophilus influenzae* has been reported as a pathogen in obstetrical and neonatal infections including neonatal meningitis (1, 3). Genital infections such as vaginitis and endometritis have also been described.

Over a period of 14 months, we have been confronted with three cases of bartholinitis due to *Haemophilus influenzae*.

The three patients were young women (aged 23, 30 and 31 years respectively) who presented with a painful swelling of the vulvar area. Bartholinitis was diagnosed and treated surgically by excision and drainage. Purulent material was sent for culture and *Haemophilus influenzae* was recovered as sole pathogen in all three cases. Capsule type was determined using commercially available antisera (Difco, USA). Two strains were of type b and beta-lactamase negative. The third strain was a non-typable beta-lactamase positive strain.

The prevalence of *Haemophilus influenzae* in the genital tract is low (0.7-3.5%), and consistently higher in the male urethra than in cervicovaginal secretions (2). Genitourinary

colonization by this organism can originate either from the upper respiratory tract or gastrointestinal tract. In a recent study, Quentin et al. (4) described eight cases of abscess of the Bartholin's gland due to non-typable strains of *Haemophilus influenzae*. In contrast, two of our strains were of serotype b, which is considered to be more virulent.

In accordance with these authors, we think that *Haemophilus influenzae* should be considered a potential pathogen in Bartholin's gland abscesses. More data on serological and biological typing must be collected to define the clinical features and epidemiological trends of these infections.

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