For Recurrent BV, Stay With Metronidazole Gel

SAN DIEGO — Long-term use of metronidazole gel remains the mainstay of treatment for women with recurrent bacterial vaginosis, said Dr. Jeanne Marrazzo of the division of allergy and infectious disease at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Patients are advised to use intravaginal metronidazole gel 0.75% at bedtime for 10-14 days, but nearly a third of women discontinue treatment before retesting.

Dr. Marrazzo said that bacterial vaginosis, which is associated with preterm delivery, leads to considerable confusion for clinicians and researchers alike. Whether to screen or treat multiple times, when to stop smoking, and nearly a third of women diagnosed with asthma than are men.

â€” Forced expiratory volume in 1 second declines more rapidly in women than in men, even in nonsmokers or if pack-years of exposure to tobacco are taken into account.
â€” Inflammation, which plays a key role in COPD pathology, seems especially important in women with the disease. For example, women have increased lung inflammation even after they stop smoking, and nearly a third of nonsmoking women with COPD also have autoimmune diseases.

Theories abound as to the gender differences in COPD, which are only recently being explored. Some researchers believe that women’s smaller airways trap smoke particles and other noxious stimuli, increasing their exposure time. Others favor a hormonal explanation, suggesting that estrogen’s impact on the cytochrome p450 system in the liver may bioactivate harmful compounds found in tobacco smoke. Women may process heavy metals in tobacco smoke, such as cadmium, differently from men. And there may be a gender-specific genetic predisposition to bronchial reactivity.

Keep COPD in mind when you see a woman with lung disease, Dr. Hardin said. Current treatments, which include short- and long-acting bronchodilators, re- habilitation, and inhaled glucocorticosteroids, hold the promise of preventing disease progression as well as relieving symptoms. Even better, physicians can counsel adolescent girls about the special risks from smoking they face later in life. The most recent government statistics show that 23% of high school girls are current smokers—edging out boys of the same age in taking up the habit early.

“We have a target population we need to counsel,” she said.

New Data Drive Update of Screening For Bacterial Vaginosis in Pregnancy

BY KATE JOHNSON
Montréal Bureau

Updated recommendations from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force advise against screening for bacterial vaginosis in pregnant women who are asymptomatic and at low risk for preterm delivery. But the recommendations remain neutral about screening in high-risk pregnancies because “current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms,” said Dr. Ned Calonge, chair of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and colleagues.

The new recommendations (Ann. Intern. Med. 2008;148:210-23) are an update of those compiled by the task force in 2001 (Am. J. Prev. Med. 2001;20:59-61). They are based on a new evidence, conducted for the task force by Peggy Nygren of the Oregon Health and Science University, Portland, and her associates and funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (Ann. Intern. Med. 2008;148:214-9). The analysis addressed “previously identified gaps, such as the characterization of patients most likely to benefit from screening and the optimal timing of screening and treatment in pregnancy outcomes,” said Dr. Calonge, who is also chief medical officer of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Denver, and his colleagues.

Ms. Nygren and her associates noted the recent convergence in 2006, Dr. Marrazzo and her associates reported a high rate of antimicrobial resistance in Women’s Health, a conference sponsored by FAMILY PRACTICE NEWS, OB/GYN. NEWS, and INTEGRAL MEDICINE NEWS.

The mechanism of action in this regimen is not fully understood. “Condom use should be part of the counseling of patients with recurrent BV,” she said.

Early trials assessing the efficacy of intravaginal capsules containing the probiotic Lactobacillus crispatus have proven disappointing, she said. But the organism remains under evaluation as a potentially useful agent for repletion of normal vaginal lactobacilli, since it is one of the three most common lactic-acid-producing bacteria in the healthy vagina.

Research shows it adheres well to vaginal epithelial cells; in 2006, Dr. Marrazzo and her associates reported a high rate of satisfaction in 232 women who used an intravaginal capsule containing lactobacillus (J. Women’s Health 2006;15:1053-60). Women in the study said they would use the product again, regardless of the clinical response they received. Dr. Marrazzo had no financial disclosures. FAMILY PRACTICE NEWS is published by the International Medical News Group, a division of Elsevier.