POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME

Poly cystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), previously referred to as Stein–Leventhal syndrome, is a worldwide disorder affecting about one fifth of women in their reproductive years. It causes disturbances in reproductive, endocrine and metabolic functions. PCOS is the focus of a great deal of research and studies indicate that its prevalence is on the increase.

The main characteristics of PCOS are ovulatory dysfunction, hyperandrogenism, insulin resistance and obesity but one needs to investigate and exclude other functional disorders which may resemble PCOS. A key feature of the PCOS is an increased level of luteinizing hormone (LH) which may prevent the maturation of the ovum when it completes the first meiotic division and may thus be responsible for causing infertility in some women.

DIAGNOSIS

The European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) state that in order for a woman to be diagnosed with PCOS, she must present with at least two criteria out of the following: oligomenorrhea and/or anovulation, hyperandrogenism (clinical and/or biochemical) and polycystic ovaries, with the exclusion of other etiologies.

Aziz states that the diagnosis of PCOS is essentially one of exclusion and that it can only be determined after ruling out thyroid dysfunction, androgen-secreting tumours and drug-induced hyperandrogenism.

The diagnosis consists of two principal steps:
1. **Identifying features which suggest that PCOS may be present, such as**
   - long-term menstrual dysfunction or irregularity
   - hyperandrogenism, such as hirsutism, acne and alopecia
   - polycystic ovaries (Figure 1)

2. **Excluding related androgen excess of ovulatory disorders**

Ovulatory dysfunction may result from thyroid dysfunction and patients with insulin resistance do not necessarily have PCOS. Patients with menstrual cycle disturbance and insulin resistance need to be examined for simultaneous signs of hyperandrogenism. The probability of having PCOS increases if a patient has polycystic ovaries together with ovulatory dysfunction with or without androgen excess.

Treatment of PCOS is based on its underlying etiology and on the presenting symptoms, as shown in Figure 2.

**CONCLUSION**

Research studies show that PCOS is not merely an endocrine disorder, but it also affects the hormonal, metabolic and psychosocial aspects which may have long-term consequences on the patient’s quality of life.

Apart from causing immediate morbidities such as chronic anovulation, menstrual irregularity and infertility during the reproductive years, PCOS may also precipitate psychological and emotional distress, cardiovascular disease and the metabolic syndrome. Type II diabetes mellitus as well as endometrial and ovarian cancer and therefore any woman with possible PCOS requires investigation and treatment.

**REFERENCES**

 PATIENT CENTRICITY
THE PATIENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM AT GRÜNENTHAL

We, at Grünenthal, want to place the patient at the centre of our way of thinking and behavior. Our daily work, as well as all strategic measures and decisions, are always guided by this vision. This means we set patient priorities and health as our first corporate goal to ensure we have a better understanding of the patient’s needs so that we can develop our business accordingly.

For us, to be patient-centric means: understanding and integrating the patients’ perspective and their unmet needs in our day-to-day activities and decision making. Identifying patients’ needs helps us to reflect how we, as a pharmaceutical company, can improve their situation with our daily work. This not only implies better treatment by e.g. providing better formulations, packaging and labeling, but also offering easy access to information on pain management.

In 2011 we decided to set up a patient ambassador program allowing us to stay in close contact with chronic pain patients. A patient ambassador at Grünenthal is either someone living with chronic pain or someone caring for a pain patient. In addition, these patient ambassadors share our objective: we all want to improve and change the lives of those suffering from chronic pain.

Through the patient ambassador program these patients or their carers have shared their stories with us and through them we have gained an in-depth insight into their lives and learned a lot about the challenges chronic pain patients are facing in their day-to-day life, their dreams and wishes.

The direct contact and integration of the ambassadors in our field of business also enable us to ask them for their open feedback and consultancy on various topics. In the past, several colleagues and departments took the opportunity to invite ambassadors to workshops or discussion rounds to ask for their input on e.g. formulations, packaging, how they rate different side-effects, and feedback on educational material for patients. Additionally they have access to our internal social network. This means that every employee has the possibility of starting discussions with the patient ambassadors and vice versa. This ensures that there is a continuous dialogue between employees and patient ambassadors which is one reason why the ambassadors are really integrated in the Grünenthal culture.

Sometimes, they also participate in external events organized in co-operation with health insurances, patient organizations, physicians and physiotherapists to raise awareness for a multimodal pain therapy approach among the general public. On these occasions the ambassadors share their experience and encourage other patient living with chronic pain not to give up and to work actively with their healthcare teams to find a treatment plan that works for them.

The Grünenthal Group is an independent, family-owned, international research-based pharmaceutical company headquartered in Aachen, Germany.

Building on its unique position in pain treatment, its objective is to become the most patient-centric company in the field of pain and thus to be a leader in therapy innovation. Grünenthal is one of the last remaining five research-oriented pharmaceutical companies with headquarters in Germany which sustainably invests in research and development.

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