Male Sexual Activity During Pregnancy

Sompol Pongthai MD, MPH.

Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology,
Faculty of Medicine, Ramathibodi Hospital,
Mahidol University, Bangkok 10400, Thailand

Abstract : *Female sexual desire and activity decreases as pregnancy advances. Little is known about the influence of pregnancy on male sexuality. This study is aimed at establishing sexual activity of husbands during their wives' pregnancy period. Questionnaires were voluntarily completed by the men whose wives had recently given birth during August and September 1982 at Ramathibodi Hospital. There were 279 men who participated. The decrease of sexual desire was markedly observed as pregnancy advanced though it remained unchanged among most men during the first and second trimester. Coital abstinence was increased toward term. Self-masturbation, wet dream and masturbation performed by their wives were significantly increased whereas coitus with prostitutes was significantly reduced. Coitus with other partners and performing masturbation for their wives remained unchanged. These findings show that pregnancy had an influence on the male partner on both sexual desire and sexual activity. (Thai J Obstet Gynaecol 1989 ; 1 : 129-32.)*

Key words : male sexuality, pregnancy

Pregnancy had multiple effects on women both physically as well as psychologically. Sexual desire and sexual activity were decreased as pregnancy advanced[1, 2]. Sexual factors were suggested on the reasons for this decline such as physical discomfort, lack of attractiveness, fear of injuring the unborn child and advice received from the physician[3, 4]. Some psychological effects on the men were also recognized during pregnancy : hypochondriac type disorders or acute psychotic states[5, 6]. Little is known about sexual activity of the male sexual partner of the pregnant woman[7].

It is believed that some change of sexual behaviour would also occur among the men during this period, so this study aimed to establish the man's sexual desire and sexual activity during pregnancy.

Meterials and Methods

Between August and September 1982, questionnaires on personal characteristics and sexual desire as well as sexual activity during one year prior to pregnancy and during pregnancy were

given to the men whose wives had recently given birth and admitted to one of the peurperal wards in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Ramathibodi Hospital. The questionnaires were voluntarily completed individually and then returned with anonymity. Proportion of those who had activity was reported as percentage of the whole after omitting the incompleted answer. Comparison of sexual desire and sexual activity was made between the one-year period prior to pregnancy and during pregnancy by *chi-square* test with determination of significance at $p < 0.05$.

Results

There were 279 men who voluntarily participated in this study (approximately 50 per cent of those distributed). Some sociobiologic characteristics were : mean age ± 1 SD was 30.9 ± 5.3 years (range 19-55 years with 50 per cent was between 30-39 years) ; educational level was 24.9 per cent primary school, 25.2 per cent secondary school, 26.4 per cent professional school, 23.1 per cent university ; religion was 95 per cent Buddhism. For their wives : mean age ± 1 SD was 27.6 ± 4.5 years (range 17-42 years with 68.2 per cent was between 20-29 years); educational level was 35.7 per cent primary school, 19.6 per cent secondary school, 28.0 per cent professional school, 16.5 per cent university ; religion was 93.9 per cent Buddhism. More than half of the pregnancies were first gravida (51.9 per cent)

Sexual desire

Table 1 indicates that sexual desire of most men remained unchanged during the first and second trimester (66.78 per cent and 56.43 per cent respectively). During the last trimester, most (59.77 per cent) had decreased sexual desire. This reduction was significantly observed as pregnancy advanced.

Table 1 Male sexual desire during each trimester of pregnancy as compared to the one-year period prior to pregnancy

Period of pregnancy	Sexual desire		
	increase	unalter	decrease
1st trimester (n = 274)	13 (4.74%)	274 (66.78%)	78 (28.46%)
2nd trimester (n = 264)	7 (2.65%)	149 (56.43%)	108 (40.9%)
3rd trimester (n = 266)	12 (4.51%)	95 (35.71%)	159 (59.77%)

Sexual activity

As shown in Table 2, during one-year prior to pregnancy, all had coitus with their wives, 13.5 per cent had extramarital coitus (another partner), 35.2 per cent had coitus with prostitutes, 33.9 per cent masturbated, 14.7 per cent were masturbated by their wives, 10.72 percent maturbated their wives, 25.9 per cent had wet dream and 0.4 per cent had homosexual contact. These activities were changed significantly during pregnancy. Masturbation, masturbation performed by their wives and wet dreams were significantly increased. Coitus with prostitutes was significantly decreased. Coitus with another partner and performing masturbation for their wives remained unchanged. Those who had

Table 2 Comparison of male sexual outlets between one-year period prior to pregnancy and during pregnancy

Sexual outlet	Time		P*
	Prior to pregnancy	During pregnancy	
Wet dream	25.9% (69/266)	33.9% (84/248)	S
Masturbation	33.9% (87/257)	43.2% (105/243)	S
Masturbation by wives	14.7% (38/258)	24.1% (59/245)	S
Masturbation to wives	10.7% (28/261)	15.5% (40/258)	NS
Coitus with wives	100% (279/279)	97.1% (268/276)	NS
Coitus with prostitutes	35.2% (86/244)	26.4% (65/246)	S
Coitus with ex-partners	13.5% (35/260)	15.5% (38/250)	NS
Homosexual	0.4% (1/263)	0.5% (1/242)	NS

* S = Significant
NS = Not Significant

coital abstinence throughout pregnancy was 2.9 per cent.

As shown is Table 3, the performance of each sexual outlet between each trimester was significantly different. Masturbation, coitus with prostitute, coitus with another partner increased as pregnancy advanced while coitus with their wives, masturbation performed by their wives and performing masturbation for their wives decreased. Erotic dream was also increased with high proportion during second trimester. There was one case who reported homosexual contact.

Discussion

This study was carried out at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Ramathibodi Hospital ; husbands of women who had recently given birth received a questionnaire concerning sexuality during pregnancy, of which 279 were voluntarily returned (approximately 50 per cent of those distributed). It is appreciated that having taken into account the methodology, this sample cannot be considered representative of the population who delivered at Ramathibodi Hospital nor the population who delivered during the period of study. However, the data provides information of the study group.

There is some change in male sexual desire during pregnancy as generally found among females[2, 7]. The

Table 3 Distribution of male sexual outlets over each trimester of pregnancy

Sexual outlet	Trimester			P*
	1st	2nd	3rd	
Wet dream	15.90% (42/264)	24.03% (62/258)	17.14% (42/245)	S
Masturbation	21.31% (52/244)	28.18% (73/259)	36.82% (95/258)	S
Masturbation by wives	15.07% (38/252)	15.23% (39/256)	14.12% (37/262)	S
Masturbation to wives	11.06% (28/253)	10.07% (26/258)	5.42% (14/258)	S
Coitus with wives	95.25% (261/274)	87.5% (231/264)	56.98%(151/265)	S
Coitus with prostitutes	11.95% (30/251)	18.18% (46/253)	19.68% (50/254)	S
Coitus with ex-partners	10.04% (25/249)	11.37% (29/255)	12.35% (31/251)	S
Homosexual	0.38% (1/257)	0.39% (1/255)	0.39% (1/251)	NS

* S = Significant
NS = Not significant

change consists of increased, decreased and unaltered sexual desire as compared to the one-year period prior to this pregnancy. Most men had unaltered sexual desire during first and second trimester. The proportion of those who reported less sexual desire increased as pregnancy advanced to the extent that more than half of the participants reported decreased desire during the third trimester. This finding can clearly demonstrate the influence of pregnancy on declining sexual desire among males as it did among females[2].

In addition to the change of sexual desire, change of the type of sexual activity is also observed. There was a significant increase in the proportion of men who had wet dreams, masturbation and masturbation performed by their wives during the entire pregnancy as compared to the one-year period to pregnancy while coitus with prostitutes was significantly decreased. There was no change of the proportion of extramarital coitus and masturbation given by men to women. These findings suggest that the alternative sexual outlets of men rather than coitus with their wives alone was still practised in marital life and pregnancy does have an influence on the increase of some types of sexual outlets, e.g. masturbation, wet dreams and masturbation performed by their wives. It is interesting to note that coitus with prostitutes was decreased, whereas, there was no change in extramarital coitus.

Sexual activities over a three three-month period during pregnancy showed the concern of men for their wives. Activities which involved their wives as sexual partners such as coitus, masturbation by their wives, masturbation to their wives were decreased significantly as pregnancy proceeded while those without involvement of their wives increased toward term.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dr. Noppadol for his assistance in preparing the manuscript.

References

1. Pongthai S, Sakornrattanakul P, Chaturachinda K. Sexual behavior during pregnancy. J Med Assoc Thailand 1979 ; 62 : 483-6.
2. Perkins RP. Sexuality in pregnancy : What determines behavior? Obstet Gynecol 1982 ; 59 : 189-98.
3. La Rossa R. Sex during pregnancy : A symbolic interactionist analysis. J Sex Res 1979 ; 15 : 119-28.
4. Solberg DA, Butler J, Wagner NN. Sexual behavior in pregnancy. N Engl J Med 1973 ; 288 : 1098-103.
5. Freeman T. Pregnancy as a precipitant of mental illness in men. Br J Med Psychol 1951 ; 24 : 49-51.
6. Haynal A. Le syndrome de Couvade. Ann Med Psychol 1968 ; 126 : 539-71.
7. Calhoun LG, Selby JW, King HE. The influence of pregnancy on sexuality : A review of current evidence. J Sex Res 1981 ; 17 : 139-51.