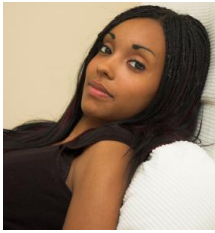


29 March 2007

By: Stefan Anitei, Science Editor



Sex Problems and Resuming Sex after Birth, Linked to Race

Health problems after birth, more frequent in Asian women

A new research made at Birmingham, UK, found that about 33 % of women still experience painful sexual intercourse a year after they gave birth and less than 15 % were completely recovered. The research was made on 482 women, aged over 16 and from all ethnic groups, who followed a self-administered questionnaire at least a year after their most recent birth and the baby had no congenital abnormalities. "87 % complained of at least one health problem" says Midwife Amanda Williams. "Asian women, who made up 15 % of the survey, were more likely to complain of health problems than white women, as were women who were older and had larger babies and longer labors." The research revealed that the three most common problems were sex-related health issues (55 %), stress urinary incontinence (54 %) and urge urinary incontinence (37 %). Painful intercourse was experienced by 19 % of women who gave birth by cesareans, 34% in the case of a normal birth and 36 % of women who gave birth assisted by an instrument, like forceps. Sex-related health problems occurred at 77 % amongst the instrument-assisted births and "just" 51 % among cesarean births, with 64 % of women who experienced normal births. Instrument-assisted women also required two weeks longer to resume sexual intercourse (ten weeks versus eight) but the figures varied between one week to 52. Forceps births were also linked to higher levels of stress, urge, and continual incontinence. Epidural did not inflict an overall increase in health problems. Asian women were prone to higher health problems than white and Afro-Caribbean women. Perineal pain was 62 % versus 28 % and continual urinary incontinence 35 % versus 20 %. "Our research has raised a number of issues. For example, it has highlighted concerns about the long-term health effects resulting from forceps deliveries and the variations in ill health between white and Asian women. Both these areas could benefit from further research," said Williams. "It's also important to point out that while women who had had cesareans reported fewer problems with the health issues covered by this study, this delivery method is associated with other problems that have a negative effect on women's quality of life, like adhesions and wound infections." "We believe that our study points to the need for health professionals to provide ongoing support for women who have given birth, focusing on issues such as perineal problems and sensitive health problems. This, coupled with greater public awareness of these issues, will hopefully make it easier for women to get help for both short-term and long-term health problems."