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Letter to the Editor, BJOG Exchange

Re: Vaginal seeding following cesarean delivery: a commentary regarding clinical management

Vaginal seeding; implications, trends and expectations of the pregnant women

‘Vaginal seeding’ became popular after the assumption that it would restore the microbiota of a newborn infant delivered by caesarean section to that of a vaginally delivered neonate with Lactobacillus-dominant state. This led to numerous publications implying the advantages and mostly disadvantages associated with vaginal seeding (VS) ^{1,2}. Recent publication in the journal gives us another excellent evidence based account of the implications of VS ¹.

Irrespective of growing evidence of concerns associated with it, there has been a rapid rise in the demand for VS ^{1,3}. Emerging clinical evidence, particularly the study by Dominguez-Bello MG et al ⁴ which showed partial restoration of the microbiota after caesarean section with VS is interesting. VS if it is of any clinical benefit would likely gift them a more normal colony of organisms with potential positive health benefits. These may range from improve the incidence of obesity, autism, asthma, atopic conditions, and other non-communicable diseases. We live in an on demand world and expectant mothers can opt for any intervention that would keep their kids on a favourable ground among their highly competitive peers. Some Australian hospitals have already developed clinical guidelines for vaginal seeding for patients who request it ⁵. It may be a matter of respecting the patient’s autonomy, response to pressure from patient advocacy groups or supporting the expectant woman who may get the feeling that she had the “ownership” of the caesarean birth following VS.

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However it seems that nobody knows the answer for the million dollar question “Is vaginal seeding clinically useful?” Until we find hard evidence, pregnant women will continue making the decision to have VS performed or not for the best interest of their neonate. It will be interesting to see the follow up results and academic performances of the neonates who had VS performed once they become pre-schoolers and commence regular schooling. It obviously will take few more years and until then VS will continue to take place and will continue to create puzzles among care givers despite the numerous publications against it.

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