PSYCHOSEXUAL ADJUSTMENT FOLLOWING STERILIZATION: A PROSPECTIVE STUDY ON CHINESE WOMEN

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(Received 22 September 1995; accepted 15 July 1996)

Abstract—The present study aimed to identify significant predictors of Chinese women's psychosexual adjustment after sterilization. One hundred fifteen multiparous Chinese women, aged 25–51 years, were interviewed before and after elective laparoscopic or postpartum sterilization. Eight-seven women were also interviewed about their psychosexual adjustment at 1 year after sterilization. Results showed that the fear of negative evaluation by others, family cohesion and adaptability, and preoperative psychological distress were robust predictors of adverse psychosexual outcome immediately and 1 year after sterilization. There was significant improvement in women's mental health following sterilization, and their sexual adjustment such as coital frequency and sexual satisfaction were not adversely affected at 1 year follow-up. Women with either elective or postpartum sterilization had similar adjustment throughout, except the latter group tended to experience more physical discomfort at 1 year follow-up. About 3.4% of the women experienced regret at 12 months after sterilization. Copyright © 1997 Elsevier Science Inc.

Keywords: Chinese sterilization; Regret; Reversal; Psychosexual adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Female sterilization has become a major contraceptive method for women who have completed their families [1]. International patterns show that sterilization users are concentrated in Asian countries, China and India in particular, because of these countries' need to control their population size [2]. It is estimated that half of the 159 million female sterilization procedures that will be performed between 1990 to 2000 will occur in China [3]. Yet, very little is known about how Chinese women adjust to sterilization and whether they will experience any long-term adverse consequences.

A review of Western studies on sterilization showed that the reasons for the decision and the timing of the operation affected women's postoperative psychosexual adjustment and satisfaction [4–9]. Women who felt pressurized by their gynecologists or husbands into undergoing sterilization had more problems in overcoming the psychological stress accompanying the procedure than those who, through a se-