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## Dr. Priya Aarth Archunan

1. Department of Obstetrics and  
Gynaecology, R.N.T. Medical  
College, Udaipur, Rajasthan,  
India

2. Urban Community Health  
Centre (UHC), Kodambakkam  
Zone, Chennai, Tamil Nadu,  
India

## Dr. Sangeeta Sen

Department of Obstetrics and  
Gynaecology, R.N.T. Medical  
College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

## Dr. Aruna Naik

Department of Obstetrics and  
Gynaecology, R.N.T. Medical  
College, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

## A rare case of forgotten foreign body in vagina: Still a rural treatment for prolapse

Dr. Priya Aarth Archunan, Dr. Sangeeta Sen and Dr. Aruna Naik

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### Abstract

**Background:** Utero-vaginal prolapse is one among the major gynaecological manifestations in elderly women. Because of the improper awareness, socio and regional myth constrained the women population to come forward to take the proper treatment. In line with these unethical medicinal practices also influences on the severity of the disease condition.

**Material and Method:** Gynaecological examination for the complaints of foul-smelling vaginal discharge, associated with pain in the lower abdomen, for the past one week.

**Results:** This report illustrates a case of forgotten foreign body in vagina, a wood apple, which was used as a local treatment for procidentia. It was retained and forgotten for about 10 years, after which the woman developed a foul-smelling vaginal discharge. The foreign body was mobile with edges free. Therefore, it was removed under manual pressure and with the help of a speculum.

**Conclusion:** After antibiotics coverage she was operated for vaginal hysterectomy and pelvic floor repair. No complications were encountered post-operatively.

**Keywords:** Foreign body in vagina, wood apple, procidentia, rural treatment

### Introduction

Uterine prolapse is a kind of dislocation where the uterus has slipped from its normal position into the vagina [1]. It is the most common gynaecological problem in women, which is 11–19% of life time risk among the women from high income countries [2]. Among the prolapse cases about 35% to 38% patients presented with stages I and II, whereas 24% were found in stage 0. Pregnancy was the primary cause of most of the uterine prolapse [3]; however, other risk factors such as BMI, age, vaginal mode of delivery and multiparity were also reported [4, 5]. Currently, behavioural guidance and certain non-surgical therapies remain an option for postpartum pelvic organ prolapse. *Astragalus membranaceus* is commonly prescribed to the patients with pelvic organ prolapse. It is reported to dilate the peripheral blood vessels there by improve microcirculation and regulate collagen metabolism and also improve sex hormone levels [6]. Traditional Chinese medicine in support to biofeedback electrical stimulation therapy has remarkable clinical efficacy towards postpartum pelvic organ prolapse [6].

In recent days, procidentia type of cases have become uncommon due to the advancements in surgery and other health care facilities which have come to be available even at primary health centre level. Irrespective of the age, when a woman complains of foul-smelling vaginal discharge, it is suspected to be due to a foreign body. The patient in the present case was from a rural area, where these kinds of local treatments are prevalent as a treatment for prolapse even today. Utero-vaginal prolapse is most common among elderly women and multigravidas are a part of the neglected society in rural India, hence more prone to such kinds of misapprehends.

### Case report

A 54-year-old woman from a rural district of Rajasthan visited our Gynaecology Outpatient Department, with complaints of foul-smelling vaginal discharge, associated with pain in the lower abdomen, for the past one week. There was no other prominent history like bleeding per vagina, bowel or bladder disturbance, nausea, fever, loss of weight, or appetite. She had attained menopause 7 years earlier. She was not sexually active for the past 10 years. She was a Para 4 with all full term normal vaginal institutional deliveries with abdominal sterilization also done during the post-partum period of the last delivery, 15 years back. All other antenatal and postpartum events were uneventful. General examination was normal.

### Corresponding Author:

#### Dr. Priya Aarth Archunan

1. Department of Obstetrics and  
Gynaecology, R.N.T. Medical  
College, Udaipur, Rajasthan,  
India

2. Urban Community Health  
Centre (UHC), Kodambakkam  
Zone, Chennai, Tamil Nadu,  
India

On vaginal examination [Figure 1] she had a grade 3 cystocele with lax perineum and enterocele; a hard black mass of about 5.5 cm size, with rounded edges, was felt in the posterior fornix. Further examination revealed a foul-smelling pus discharge from the vagina, most likely giving a suspect of foreign body. On further being questioned, she narrated that 10 years back she had complaints of mass descending per vagina which was likely to be a prolapse for which she had local treatment and it resolved the next day itself. On further inquiry, she did not disclose any further detail of the kind of treatment received nor any special instruction was available to her from the local quack.

Suspecting a foreign body insertion, we proceeded with speculum examination [Figure 2] and found a black mass impacted in the posterior fornix, which was mobile. With the help of manual pressure, and the patient being cooperative, the foreign body was removed in the OPD. The impacted foreign body was found to be a wood apple [Figure 3]. Following the removal of the foreign body a copious amount of pus drained, which was collected and sent for pus culture and sensitivity. The culture results showed the growth of *Candida* species.

Following the removal of the foreign body, vaginal examination revealed third-degree utero-vaginal prolapse. Ultrasonography revealed low-lying uterus, suggestive of prolapse. Her preoperative blood investigations were all normal. Following 5 days of betadine tamponing and antibiotic coverage she was posted for vaginal hysterectomy with cystocele and pelvic floor repair. Since intra- operative and post-operative events were uneventful, she was discharged on day 5 with no complications.



**Fig 1:** The local examination of the patient showing cystocele with lax perineum



**Fig 2:** Per speculum examination, which revealed the presence of foreign body



**Fig 3:** The manually removed foreign body, wood apple

## Discussion

There are over twenty different types of supportive or space filling pessaries being used worldwide [7]. In the present case, a wood apple was used as a treatment for prolapse which was first practiced by Soranus who used a woollen tampon dipped in vinegar to reduce the prolapse [8]. It has been previously reported that purposeful insertion of wood apple of size of 6x6 cm into a woman's vagina will reduce the impact of uterovaginal prolapse [9]. Most of the impacted foreign bodies in the vagina can be removed either manually or with the help of instruments like forceps or vacuum cup [10]. However, the present case was a little uncomplicated in which the foreign body could be removed manually. Insertion of the wood apple would provide only a symptomatic relief, wherein the last resort of management would be surgical intervention. Several objects, like tampons, suppositories, diaphragms and medications, are in practice for use in vaginal prolapse. Certain other objects, which are not intended to be inserted, but placed in the vagina accidentally or intentionally, are referred to as foreign body [9]. The most common symptoms of foreign body in vagina include foul smelling vaginal discharge, vaginal bleeding, vaginal itching, discomfort during urination, abdominal and pelvic pain, skin redness, swelling in the vagina, rashes, and so on. The objects inserted vary according to the age group. Occasionally, more than one foreign body are inserted into the vagina and retained from childhood [9-12 years] to elderly age. Some such items among children are paediatrics toys, tissue paper and household objects, whereas in adult women tampons, condoms, and items used for sexual gratification are common. In elderly woman medical devices such as pessaries are common. The engaged foreign bodies in the vagina would cause complications like ulceration, bleeding and fistula formation.

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