

# A rare off-site aperture of the anal canal following an obstetric anal sphincter trauma.

Sofoklis Stavros<sup>1</sup>, Ioannis Papapanagiotou<sup>2</sup>, Dimitris Zacharakis<sup>3</sup>, Kyriaki Migklis<sup>3</sup>, Rafail Mantzioros<sup>3</sup>, Ekaterini Domali<sup>3</sup>, Ioannis Chatzipapas<sup>2</sup>, Peter Drakakis<sup>3</sup>, and Alexandros Rodolakis<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>General Hospital of Athens Alexandra

<sup>2</sup>General Hospital Alexandra

<sup>3</sup>National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

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## Abstract

Obstetric anal sphincter injury is a common complication of vaginal delivery. Such injuries are more likely to result in postpartum fecal incontinence and thus diagnosis and restoration of perineal injuries at the time of vaginal delivery is of paramount importance.

## A rare off-site aperture of the anal canal following an obstetric anal sphincter trauma.

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*1<sup>st</sup> Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Alexandra General Hospital, University of Athens, Athens, Greece*

## Question:

What is the cause of this condition and how can be prevented?

## Answer:

A 39-year-old refugee woman (para 4, gravida 4) was referred to the Gynecological Outpatient Clinic due to vulvodynia, dyspareunia, and defecatory symptoms. The onset of these symptoms occurred immediately after her last home-vaginal delivery three years ago, in her country of origin. Anal inspection revealed absence of the perineal body, the corrugator cutis ani and an off-site aperture of the anal canal in the posterior proximal vaginal surface. Digital rectal examination exposed a very large sphincteric defect, while both the resting tone and the squeeze contraction were completely absent.

Obstetric anal sphincter injury (OASIS) is a common complication of vaginal delivery. Risk factors include maternal (primiparity, age, maternal diabetes, infibulation), delivery (operative vaginal delivery, episiotomy, shoulder dystocia) and infant (birth weight >4 kgr, malpresentation, postmaturity) characteristics. The incidence of OASIS in the literature varies widely, reflecting wide variations in obstetric practice and inaccurate reporting related to training of doctors and midwives.<sup>1</sup> Endoanal ultrasonography demonstrates ‘occult’ anal sphincter injuries in women presenting with anal incontinence. It remains to be established whether these injuries are truly ‘occult’ or represent ‘overt’ anal sphincter injuries that have either been wrongly classified

as a second-degree tear or missed. These missed injuries are more likely to result in postpartum fecal incontinence and thus diagnosis and restoration of perineal injuries at the time of vaginal delivery is of paramount importance.

*Reference:*

<sup>1</sup> *Obstetrical Anal Sphincter Injuries (OASIS): prevention, recognition and Repair. J Obstet Gynaecol Can 2015;37(12):1131–1148*

*Key Clinical Message*

Missed obstetric injuries of the anal sphincter are more likely to result in postpartum fecal incontinence and thus diagnosis and restoration of perineal injuries at the time of vaginal delivery is of paramount importance.



