

# The Case of the Vanishing Yoni Pearl

Lucy Brown BS, Adaline Heitz MSPH, Luci Hulsman BS, Natalie Cox BA, Megan Christman DO  
Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis Indiana

## Case Presentation and Background

A 41-year-old female presented to the Emergency Department (ED) with a retained vaginal foreign body (VFB). She reported inserting a detoxifying “yoni” pearl 36 hours prior. She was unable to remove it herself. She denied fever, vaginal pain, discharge, or dysuria. A gynecologist was consulted, and the VFB was removed manually without complications.

Yoni Pearls are marketed as a way to “detox” the vagina and improve vaginal cleanliness. They consist of various herbs wrapped in mesh cloth advertised as a homeopathic treatment for medical concerns ranging from bacterial vaginosis, STIs, fibroids, cysts, and vaginal candidiasis.<sup>1</sup>



*The feminine hygiene market generated \$20.9 billion in 2020.<sup>2</sup>*

## Methods

Pubmed and Google Scholar were searched for peer-reviewed articles with no date restrictions. Search terms included “vaginal foreign body.” Pediatric cases were excluded. In total, 27 cases or case series were identified.

**Table 1. Patient Demographics**

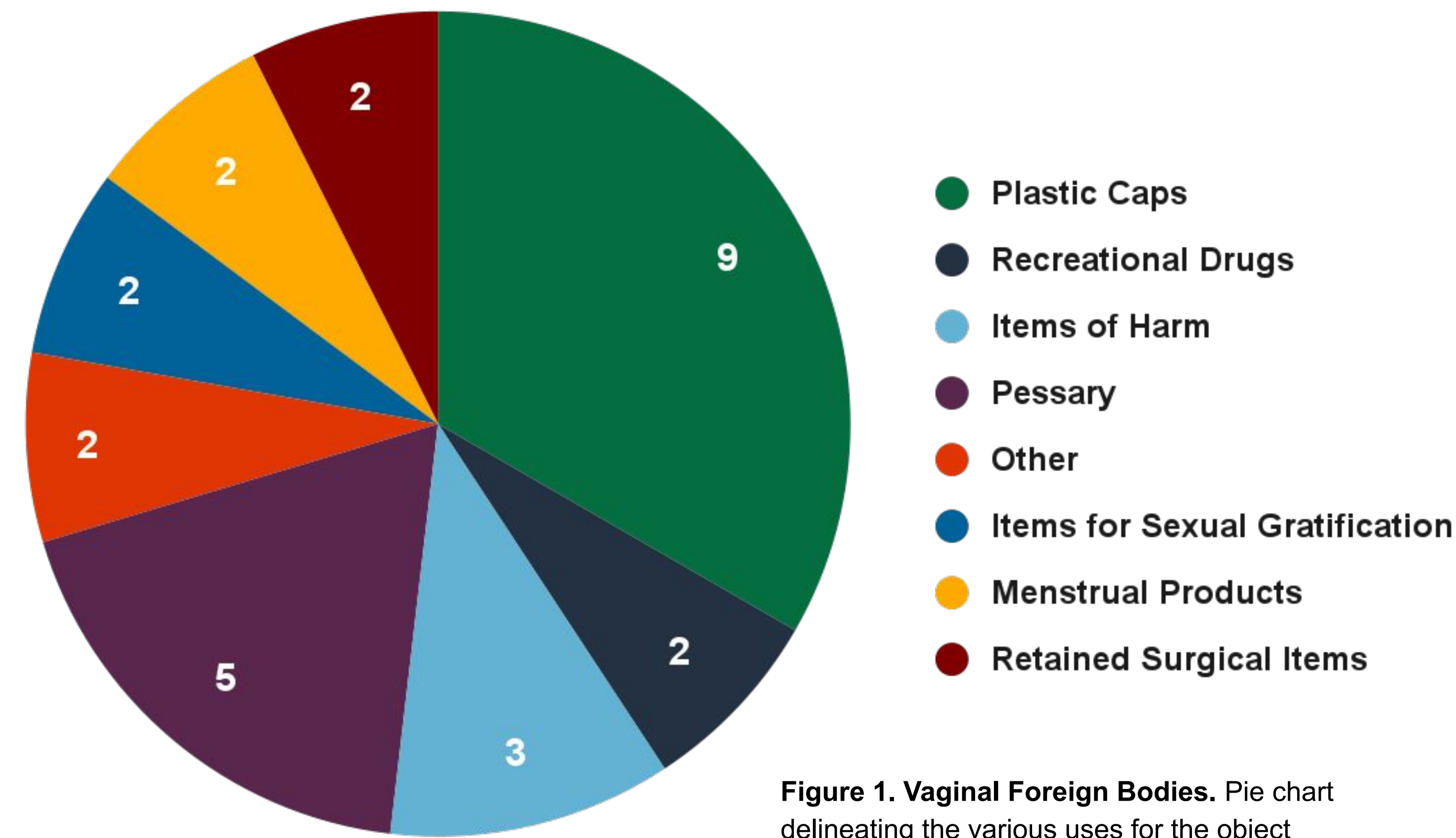
Age	n (%)*
<20	4 (14.8)
20-39	10 (37.0)
40-59	6 (22.2)
60-79	3 (11.1)
>80	3 (11.1)
Missing	1 (3.7)
Menopausal Status	
Pre	16 (59.2)
Post	8 (29.6)
Missing	3 (11.1)
Other	
Mental health comorbidity	3 (11.1)

\*Percentages were calculated out of a total of 27 studies and may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**89,160 female patients presented to the ED with a vulvar/vaginal foreign body from 2010 to 2014.<sup>5</sup>**

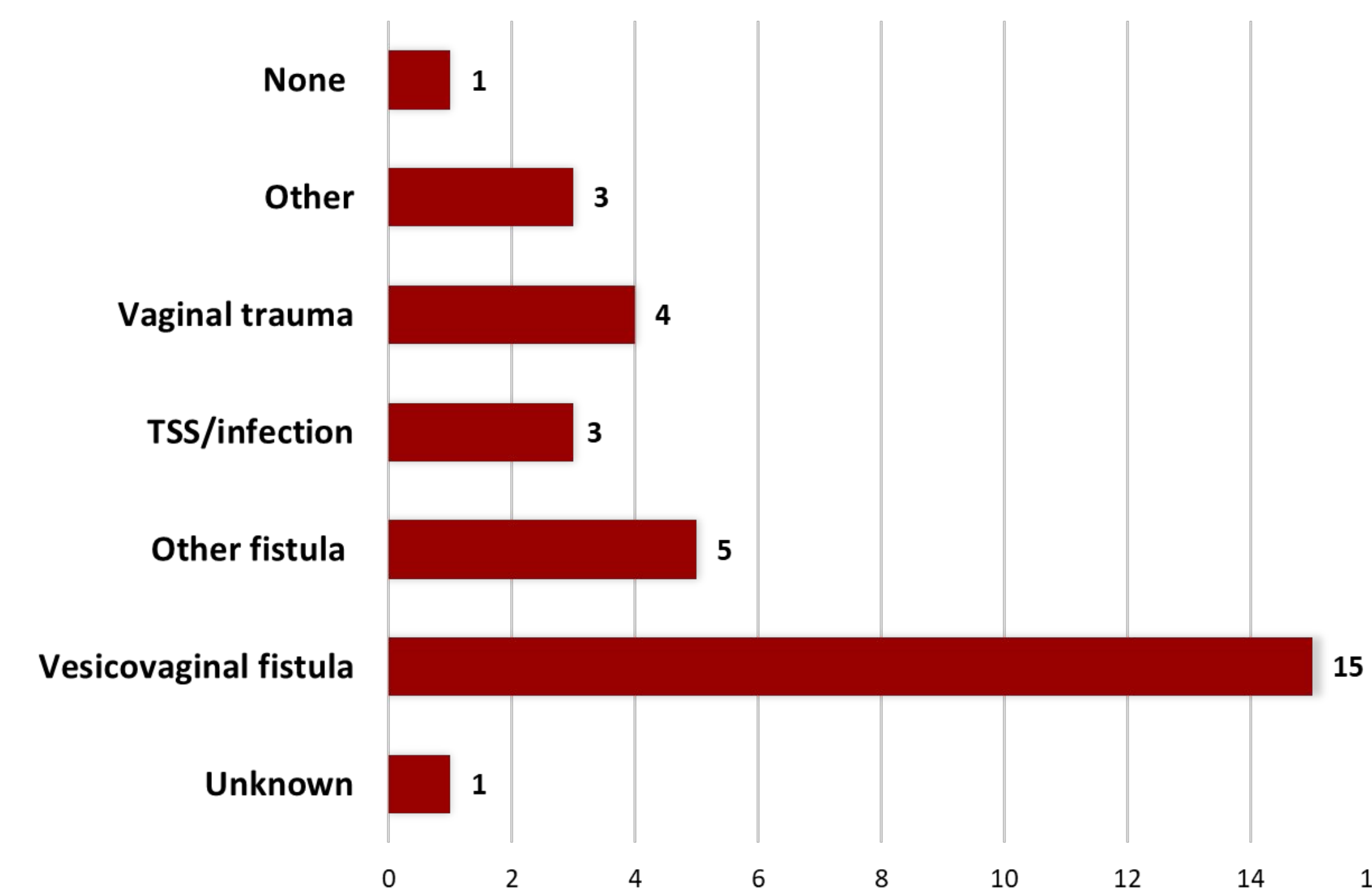
**93% of cases reported at least one complication secondary to VFB**

## Vaginal Foreign Bodies



**Figure 1. Vaginal Foreign Bodies.** Pie chart delineating the various uses for the object inserted intentionally or unintentionally into the vaginal canal. Three cases did not report type of foreign body.

## COMPLICATIONS

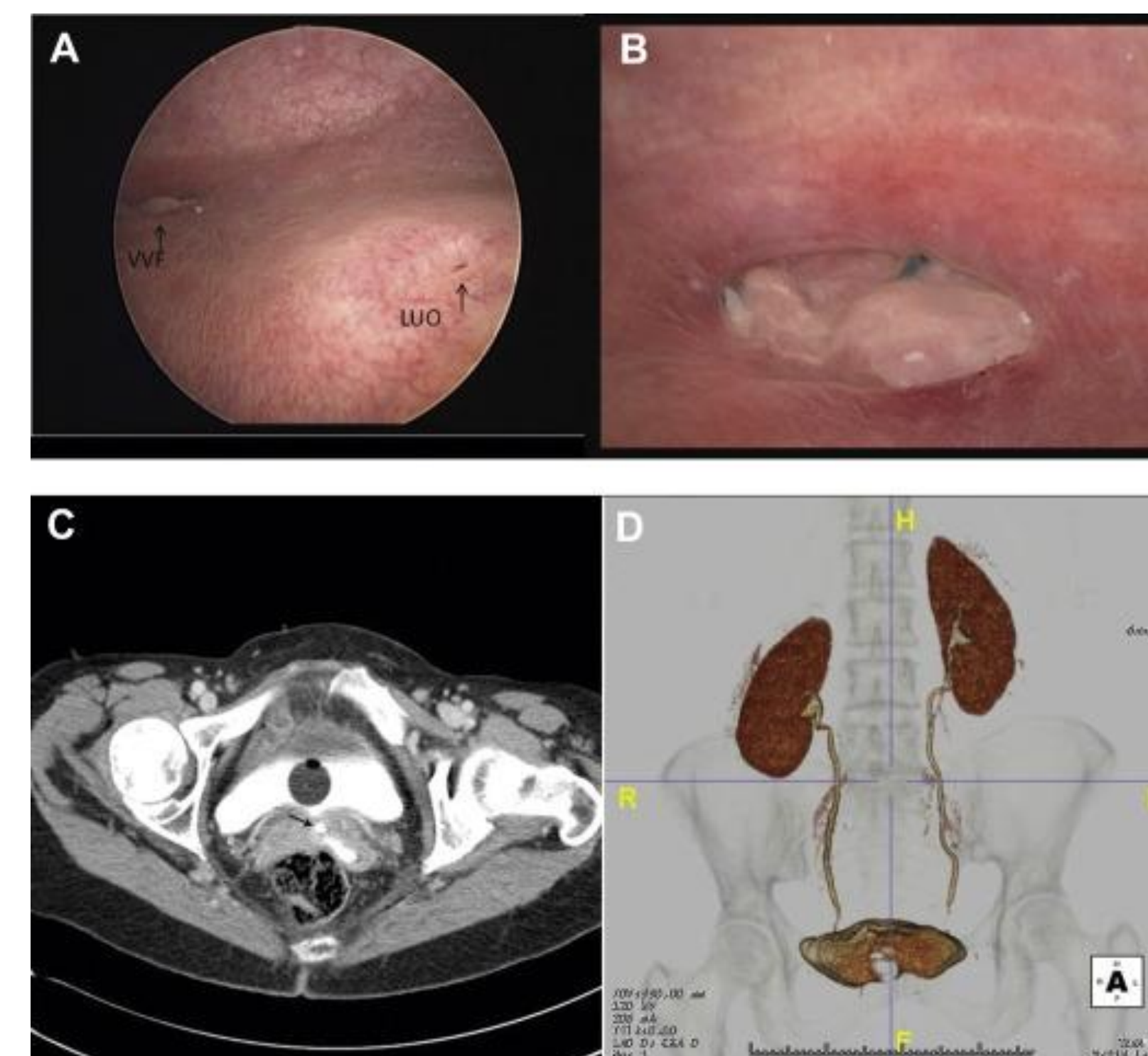


**Figure 2. Complications.** Note that totals may exceed the total number of included studies because some cases resulted in multiple complications. TSS = toxic shock syndrome.

## Vesicovaginal Fistula



**Figure 3.** Vesicovaginal fistula was found to be the most common complication of VFBs among adult women (image: <https://go.iu.edu/4ir4>). VFBs can lead to compromise of blood flow to that region, necrosis, perforation, and, consequently, fistulas.



**Figure 4.** (A) Vesicovaginal fistula seen by cystoscopy. VVF = vesicovaginal fistula; LUO = left ureteral orifice. (B) Vesicovaginal fistula seen by cystoscopy, closer view. (C) Vesicovaginal fistula (arrow) identified at the posterior aspect of the bladder seen by contrast-enhanced computed tomography urography. (D) Computed tomography urography confirms no ureteral involvement (Fouad, et al 2016).

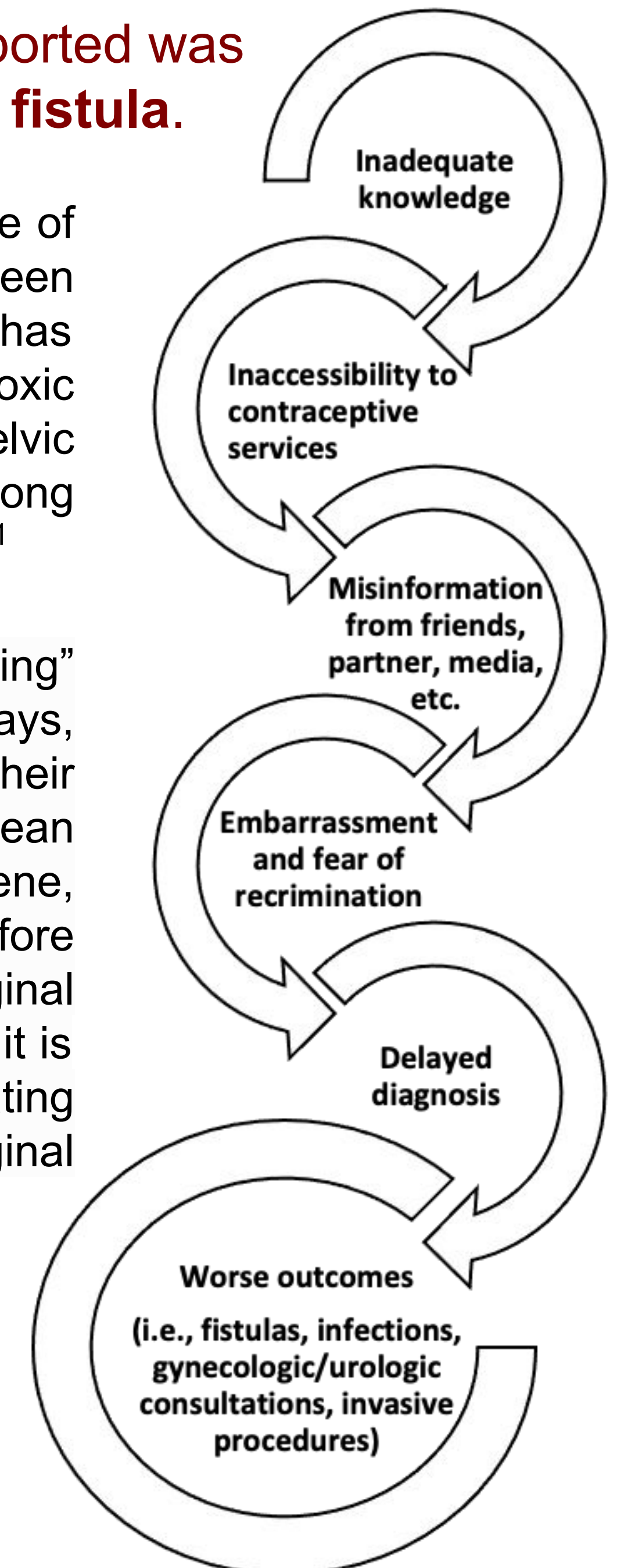
## Conclusions

**The most common VFB was a plastic aerosol cap, and the most common complication reported was vesicovaginal fistula.**

Detoxifying treatment by use of yoni pearls has not been recognized by the FDA and has the potential to cause toxic shock syndrome and pelvic inflammatory disease, among other severe complications.<sup>1</sup>

Users of the vaginal “cleaning” products (i.e. washes, sprays, wipes, douches) report their motivations were to feel clean after menses, general hygiene, to cleanse themselves before or after sex, to reduce vaginal odor, or because they think it is normal, thereby perpetuating the stigma of vaginal uncleanliness.

Any products that disrupt the natural vaginal microbiome can have negative consequences on fertility and defense against pathogens.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 5.** Here we depict a model for VFB occurrence in women ages 18 to 69 and areas for public health intervention as discussed by Lo et al. 2018.

**There exists an urgent need to shift societal standards of vaginal cleanliness and call for accountability of companies selling products with known associated harm to users.**

## References

- Carazas A. Yoni Pearls: Everything You Need to Know. 2021 May 20. <https://www.teenhealthcare.org/blog/yni-pearls/>
- The Global Feminine Hygiene Products Market Size Is Projected to Grow from USD 20.9 Billion in 2020 to USD 27.7 Billion by 2025, at a CAGR of 5.8% during the Forecast Period 2020 to 2025. GlobeNewswire News Room. ReportLinker, 2020 Nov 27.
- Grimley DM, Annang L, Foushee HR, Bruce FC, Kendrick JS. Vaginal douches and other feminine hygiene products: Women’s practices and perceptions of product safety. Maternal and child health journal. 2006 May;10(3):303-10.
- Jenkins A, Money D, O’Doherty KC. Is the vaginal cleansing product industry causing harm to women?. Expert Review of Anti-infective Therapy. 2021 Mar 4;19(3):267-9.
- Rodriguez D, Thirumavalavan N, Pan S, et al. Epidemiology of genitourinary foreign bodies in the united states emergency room setting and its association with mental health disorders. Int J Impot Res. 2020;32(4):426-433. doi:10.1038/s41443-019-0194-z

Literature review sources here:

