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<u>A NEW CONDITION SPECIFIC QUALITY OF LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN WITH ANO-RECTAL INCONTINENCE</u>
<u>Aim of Study</u>
To design and validate a condition specific quality of life questionnaire for the assessment of women with ano-rectal incontinence.
<u>Method</u>
The questionnaire was designed by adapting the King's Health Questionnaire a condition specific quality of life questionnaire for the assessment of women with urinary incontinence (1). The basic structure of the King's Health Questionnaire was retained. Five different pilot studies were conducted, one tested face to face validity and four tested content validity. The final amended version was tested for validity and reliability using standard psychometric techniques. Subjects participated in the study by post and were selected consecutively from a database of female patients referred for the investigation of ano-rectal incontinence. Respondents were sent a second questionnaire 2 weeks later to test for test retest reliability.
<u>Results</u>
One hundred and thirty patients were sent questionnaires. Ninety eight patients returned the questionnaires (75%). Five of these sets of questionnaires were too incomplete for analysis. Seventy one patients returned the retest questionnaire. All 8 domains of the questionnaire were shown to possess an adequate level of reliability by test retest as strong correlations were observed between the domain scores on the test and retest questionnaires ($p < 0.01$). Internal consistency was adequate with cronbach alpha greater than 0.7 (2) for all the quality of life domains tested except the domain entitled severity measures which had a cronbach alpha of 0.65. The homogeneity this domain was improved by removing just one of the five questions in the scale, increasing the cronbach alpha to 0.76. Criterion validity was measured by correlation with scores obtained on the Short form 36 UK version (3). Moderate correlation was noted for all the 6 domains tested ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$).

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The table shows the results of the tests of reliability and validity

Domains	Internal Consistency (cronbach alpha)	Test retest reliability (SCC)*	Criterion validity (SCC)*
General Health	N/A	0.89	-0.83
Incontinence impact	N/A	0.83	N/A
Role	0.73	0.74	-0.44
Physical function	0.77	0.80	-0.55
Social function	0.89	0.91	-0.65
Personnal function	0.89	0.93	N/A
Emotional problems	0.89	0.91	-0.55
Sleep/energy	0.76	0.86	-0.34
Severity measures	0.65	0.92	N/A

*Results are significant p-value <0.01.(SCC)=Spearman's rho nonparametric correlation coefficient. N/A = not applicable. The Short form 36 score is high for good results where the faecal incontinence questionnaire score is high when results are poor.

Conclusion

The questionnaire is both a valid and reliable instrument for the assessment of quality of life among women with faecal incontinence and incontinence of flatus. It will be useful in many different clinical settings and as the good response rates show could be a successful part of a postal survey. We hope it will be used in the evaluation of women after childbirth.

References

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3. A Quality of Life Measurement in Health Care. A Review of Measures and Population Norms for the UK-SF-36. Health Services Research Unit, Department of Public Health and Primary Care. Oxford: University of Oxford, 1993.