

## URINARY INCONTINENCE IN NURSING HOME RESIDENTS: IS IT BEING PROMOTED BY NURSING HOME STAFF?

### Hypothesis / aims of study

Urinary incontinence is a significant problem in nursing home residents. It is the second leading cause of the institutionalization of elderly individuals, being present in at least 55 % of nursing home residents. The prevalence increases progressively with age. Several age-related physiological changes and comorbid illnesses may have an effect on bladder control, causing urinary frequency, urgency and urge incontinence.

Little research has been conducted into the management of urinary incontinence in nursing home residents. A number of studies have reported a commonly held opinion among nursing staff that urinary incontinence is a normal part of ageing and that nothing can be done to prevent it. Some studies have shown that attitudes towards incontinence by nursing staff might be a contributing factor, for example when requests for toilet assistance are ignored. This might be due to inadequate knowledge about causes of bladder control problems.

The aim of this study is to explore how often a request for toilet assistance is evaluated as being “unnecessary” by nursing staff, and to ascertain whether certain subgroups of nursing home residents are especially prone to promotion of urinary incontinence due to inadequate care.

### Study design, materials and methods

Residents from six different nursing homes were included in this study. Data on sex, age, medication, comorbid illnesses, urinary incontinence and the use of absorbent pads was collected. The Barthel Index of activities of daily living (ADLs) was used to estimate residents' functional levels. A questionnaire was completed by the nursing staff for each of the residents. Nurses were asked whether requests for toilet assistance were sometimes deemed “unnecessary”. Post-voiding residual urine was measured by means of a portable ultrasound. Nurses at each nursing home were trained in data collection and the use of the BVI 3000 ultrasound BladderScan. Analyses were performed using SPSS, version 10.

### Results

In total, 173 residents (51 men, 122 women) participated in the study. The mean score on the Barthel ADL scale was 8, indicating that, on average, nursing home residents had a high grade of dependency.

One hundred and twenty residents (69%) were incontinent for urine. In 49 residents (28%), requests for toilet assistance were sometimes deemed by nursing staff as being “unnecessary”. Fourteen percent of residents used absorbent pads without having been diagnosed with urinary incontinence. No significant relation was found between certain medical conditions and the evaluation of requests for toilet assistance as “unnecessary”.

### Interpretation of results

Requests for toilet assistance were often deemed “unnecessary” by nursing staff. In addition, absorbent products were frequently used without a previous diagnosis of incontinence.

Nurses need to gain adequate knowledge of the causes of urinary incontinence, urgency and frequency in the elderly. A possible consequence of inadequate knowledge is promotion of urinary incontinence by telling residents to wait or ignoring a request for toilet assistance.

### Concluding message

Request to come to the toilet are often deemed “unnecessary” by nursing home staff. This could be due to inadequate knowledge of the underlying conditions affecting bladder control.

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| <b><i>Is this a clinical trial?</i></b>                        | <b>No</b>   |
| <b><i>What were the subjects in the study?</i></b>             | <b>HUMAN</b>  |
| <b><i>Was this study approved by an ethics committee?</i></b>  | <b>Yes</b>  |
| <b><i>Specify Name of Ethics Committee</i></b>                 | <b>The Regional Ethics Review board, Trøndelag, Norway</b>  |
| <b><i>Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?</i></b>        | <b>Yes</b>  |
| <b><i>Was informed consent obtained from the patients?</i></b> | <b>Yes</b>  |