

MEANINGS OF THE BODY AND SEXUALITY EXPERIENCED BY BRAZILIAN WOMEN WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE

Hypothesis / aims of study

To discuss the meanings associated with the body and the experience of sexuality reported by Brazilian women with urinary incontinence.

Study design, materials and methods

We carried out a clinical and qualitative research, through the semi structured interview technical, with open questions. The clinical-qualitative method, which is a particular version of the qualitative method specifically focused on the relationship of a determined problem on the health-disease area, showing and understanding feelings and human needs, listen the speech of the subject with their wealth of emotional expressions and intonations and include observation of behaviour through its non-verbal language, and used covers two areas: the clinical-psychological knowledge of interpersonal relations and epistemological conceptions of qualitative research method developed from the humanities, that is, a comprehensive approach/interpretation[1]. The interviews were interpreted using the thematic content analysis and elaboration of categories of analysis built on a psychodynamic frame. A convenience sample of eight women from south-eastern Brazil, which had a history of urinary incontinence and never seek a treatment, with a low socioeconomic profile, aged between 30 and 45 years.

Results

The women's experiences of living with UI are presented in two categories: (1) "A body that is damaged", and (2) "An interrupted sexuality".

Interpretation of results

The perception of their inability to control urine elimination appears to have risen to consciousness during the interview; the women realized the urinary incontinence were a real health problem and the cultural gender-related issues, such as being young women in her reproductive years, appears to have influenced the meanings of the experiences of body and sexuality. For these women, losing control of urination means experiencing the feeling that they are unlike other women, i.e., they experience the urinary problem as a body "defect", an "uncontrolled" body, both physically and emotionally. They feeling shame when they realize there has been urine loss recalls childhood experiences, when they were not able to control urination. The statements showed that these women develop theories to help explain the changes that occur during the reproductive process of becoming a mother, with feelings that their bodies were "damaged" by time and by the experience of giving birth. Their lives as women who worked and took care of their homes left little time to care for themselves. From this perspective, the current body causes feelings of longing for the body that is absent or was "lost". The women showed that experiencing incontinence is something that inhibits pleasure. The feeling of shame caused by the loss of urine predisposes the woman to an intense projection of conflicts that interfere in the couples' intimacy. However, the emotional issues linked to the sociocultural values of the body apparently determine behavior standards in their experience of sexuality, which can be used as a resource to deny the difficulties of living with incontinence. Women with incontinence submit themselves to sexual intercourse in the belief that it is their marital duty, and in order to avoid greater conflicts with their husbands. They showed that pleasure was marked with of the feeling obligation, and the sexual experiences were associated with diminished libido due to the loss of urine.

Concluding message

The incontinent women were young and were of reproductive age, exhibited the theme of an uncontrolled body with constant threats to their self-image, affecting their interaction with people and their experience of sexuality. They experienced an inhibited sexuality, with a body that was passive to the desire of their partner, having sex when they did not want to and when their pleasure was interrupted by urinary loss.

References

1. Turato ER. (2010) Tratado da metodologia da pesquisa clínico-qualitativa: construção teórico-epistemológica, discussão comparada e aplicação nas áreas da saúde e humanas. Petrópolis: Ed. Vozes, 4ª ed.

Specify source of funding or grant	None
Is this a clinical trial?	No
What were the subjects in the study?	NONE