

EPIDEMIOLOGIC ANALYSIS OF QUALITY OF LIFE PARAMETERS IN GREEK WOMEN WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE

Hypothesis / aims of study

To examine the prevalence of urinary incontinence (UI) in general population and to investigate its effect in quality of life parameters, such as social and sexual life or ability to work. It is true that urinary incontinence is a common problem among women of every age and social-economic status, causing not only health but quality of life problems as well. It is characteristic that recently published studies showed that 22% of sexually active postmenopausal women with UI believe that sexual intercourse could cause urine loss. Additionally, this category of patients presents an increased incidence of sexual distress.

For several years women who suffered from this pathologic condition refused to ask for medical help. Nowadays, it seems that information which is given by health professionals or via mass media about urinary incontinence and synchronous safe and effective therapeutic approaches leads more patients to urogynecologists.

Study design, materials and methods

This was a questionnaire based epidemiologic study. The study group consisted of 2000 women, aged between 20 up to 80 years old. The majority of women (39%) were between 20-39 years, while 33% ranged between 40-59 years. The group of older women (60-80 years old) represented the 28% of the study group members. Half of the questionnaires were collected from the main cities, while 22% and 28% of answers came from smaller towns and rural areas respectively.

Results

Totally, 531 women (27%) reported urinary incontinence. The main factors that this study revealed in strong correlation with UI were: i. age between 60-80 years old, ii. weight over 66 kg. and iii. history of more than two vaginal deliveries. The most common symptoms reported among women with UI were nocturia, urgency, vaginal dryness and voiding every three or less hours every day. Sexual distress with pain during sexual intercourse was present in 20% and 15% of sexually active women with and without UI respectively. The 28% of the study group women answered that they were working. Few of them believed that UI was responsible for problems of lack of concentration and deterioration of their normal ability to work.

Among women who reported UI, 17% of them had visited a doctor (usually gynaecologist or urologist). These women were usually over 40 years old with a period of over ten years suffering from severe UI. They reported a mean number of two medical visits for UI per year with a mean cost of 54.2 euro per examination. It is characteristic that approximately 66% of women with UI did not follow any therapy, while 2% of patients with UI were under medical treatment with a mean cost of 20.6 euro per month.

Interpretation of results

The lack of information in the field of UI was clear as the vast majority of women was not familiar with medical or alternative, with diet or exercise methods of treatment. All women must be familiar with the knowledge that synchronous methods of UI treatment (conservative, pharmaceutical or surgical) are safe and have a high therapeutic result.

Concluding message

Urinary incontinence is a common condition among general population which has an adverse effect in several parameters that characterize the quality of life. A strong effort of all health professionals to give responsible information and solutions in cooperation with specialized Urogynecological Medical Centers is needed.

Disclosures

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