

## THE PREVALENCE OF URINARY INCONTINENCE IN WOMEN IN OMAN

### Hypothesis / aims of study

The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of urinary incontinence (UI) in Omani women, the impact it has on their lives and whether they seek care for this condition.

**Relevance:** Urinary incontinence is common among women world wide, however, most data is from white women in developed nations. Prevalence and risk factors in Oman are unknown. In Oman the role of physiotherapists in relation to continence and women's health is not widely recognised despite good evidence that physiotherapy treatments are effective for UI. Establishing the prevalence of UI among Omani women and the impact it has on their daily lives will inform and justify the development of health education and treatment programs including physiotherapy.

### Study design, materials and methods

**Participants:** 800 community dwelling Muslim women aged 18 years and above; mean age . The sample included women from urban and rural areas.

**Methods:** This study was cross-sectional in design. Participants were recruited door-to-door using a stratified household-based sampling method that incorporated all eight regions of the country. Data were collected using a valid and reliable questionnaire developed for the study. Interviews were used in preference to self completion of the questionnaire as a substantial proportion of women in Oman are illiterate. Participants were interviewed in English or Arabic according to their preference.

**Analysis:** Data were summarized using descriptive statistics.

### Results

Response rate was 99%. Forty-three percent of the women did not understand the term UI until it was explained. Overall, 43% had UI; 23% stress UI; 3% urge UI and 17% mixed UI. In those affected, symptoms were moderate to severe in 25% and bothersome in 65% but only 20% sought care. Reasons for failing to seek care were lack of awareness it could be treated (53%); embarrassment (17.5%) or that it was not considered a big problem (12.5%).

### Interpretation of results

At present in Oman continence physiotherapy services are very limited and only available in the capital city Muscat. The scope of the problem of UI identified in this study suggests the need for more physiotherapy services specializing in this area and better health education about UI so that more women are aware that this disabling condition can be treated effectively.

### Concluding message

There was a high prevalence of UI among Omani women. Although the majority of those affected found the condition bothersome, the level of care seeking was low.

### Disclosures

**Funding:** United Nations Population Fund Sultan Qaboos University **Clinical Trial:** No **Subjects:** HUMAN **Ethics Committee:** The study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HR 41/2007) at Curtin University. **Helsinki:** Yes **Informed Consent:** Yes