

## THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE ON THE EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF CONTINENCE PRODUCT USE

### Hypothesis / aims of study

To study the literature and published research on the emotional and social impact of continence product use amongst patients and the lay public to identify key themes and issues.

### Study design, materials and methods

This study used a social qualitative approach to explore published literature on the emotional and social impact of continence product use, with particular emphasis on protective pads.

The research used a documentary / thematic analysis methodology to explore published documents on this issue. This was an internet-based study that explored materials available through publically accessible academic databases, such as PubMed. Using this approach, twenty-five academic texts and research studies were identified as suitable, and the results / contents of these documents were analysed using a thematic approach (1). After coding and analysis of the data, four key themes emerged.

### Results

The study identified four key themes in the academic literature and published research available on the emotional and social impact of continence product use, which were based around 'regaining dignity', 'loss of dignity', 'fear of discovery', and 'acceptance'.

### Interpretation of results

Although health professionals and the lay public are often acutely aware of the stigma and embarrassment surrounding the issue of incontinence, and significant research has been carried out into this area, far less work has explored the impact that the products (such as catheters, protective wear and pads) that are designed to ameliorate the effects of this condition, have on the individual (2).

The literature and studies that have explored this issue are small in number and scattered across a range of disciplines. This paper brings this research together and identifies the key themes identified by this work, and highlights the complex nature of the interaction between health and identity.

### Concluding message

Professionals who work in healthcare areas where incontinence is a common problem, can sometimes become desensitised to the emotional and social impact of the condition, and this can include seeing the use of 'management products' as largely unproblematic. However, this analysis of the research on the impact of continence product use on individuals, shows that the issue is far more complex and that such attitudes are not matched by the patient experience. This fits into the wider body of work looking into health related stigma, and the differences between visible and invisible conditions and problems encountered when trying to pass as 'normal' (3).

### References

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2. Getliffe, K. et. al. (2007) Absorbent products for incontinence: 'treatment effects' and impact on quality of life, *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 1938-1945
3. Scambler, G. (2009) Health related stigma, *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 31(3): 441-455

### Disclosures

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