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Title (type in CAPITAL LETTERS)	LIFE IMPACT OF ANAL INCONTINENCE AFTER CHILDBIRTH

Aims of the study: To assess the life impact of anal incontinence three month after childbirth.

Method: A cohort of 150 women delivering vaginally their first child was recruited in a study of anal incontinence after childbirth. Three months after delivery a postal questionnaire was sent to participating women, assessing anal incontinence and its impact on life. In a preliminary study, the anal incontinence questionnaire had been shown to be accurate in detecting anal incontinence by comparing it with a diagnose made during an interview with a proctologist ($\kappa=0.73$). The life impact questionnaire was derived from the short form of the incontinence impact questionnaire IIQ-7 (Uebersax et al. Neurourol Urodyn 1995; 14: 131-39). The impact on items reported in the table below were scored by the women using a 10 cm visual analog scale, 0 representing "not at all", 10 representing "very much". Comparison of scores was performed by the Mann-Whitney U test.

Results: The questionnaire was returned by 144 women. Anal incontinence was reported by 22 women (15%, 95% confidence interval 95%CI 10%-22%). Twenty women reported to be incontinent to flatus, 10 of them daily. Six women were incontinent to liquid or solid stools, 4 of them daily. Among women reporting anal incontinence, 12 (55%, 95%CI 32-76%) placed a mark beyond 1 cm on the visual analog scale for at least one item of the IIQ-7. This proportion was 15/122 (12%, 95%CI 7-19%) among women not reporting anal incontinence (Odds Ratio 8.6, 95%CI 3.2-23.3).

Table 1 : Life-impact scores (means \pm sd) of individuals and pooled items of the IIQ-7

Items of the IIQ-7	Anal incontinence		p (Mann-Whitney U)
	No (n=122)	Yes (n=22)	
Household chores	0.70 \pm 1.09	2.32 \pm 2.78	0.068
Physical recreation	0.76 \pm 1.24	1.38 \pm 2.25	0.83
Entertainment activities	0.81 \pm 1.36	1.75 \pm 2.81	0.74
Travel away >30 min from home	0.79 \pm 1.40	2.68 \pm 3.63	0.169
Social activities	0.81 \pm 1.43	2.68 \pm 3.41	0.016
Emotions (nervousness, depression, etc...)	1.01 \pm 1.96	2.18 \pm 3.26	0.124
Feeling frustated	0.91 \pm 1.65	2.68 \pm 3.24	0.004
Pooling of all items	0.84 \pm 1.13	2.35 \pm 2.69	0.008

Conclusion: Anal incontinence after childbirth significantly affects the life of mothers three months after delivery. This dimension of the problem of anal incontinence need to be assessed in outcome-oriented research.

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