

## **URINARY INCONTINENCE, ITS INFLUENCE ON DAILY LIFE, AND USE OF INCONTINENCE AIDS IN TWO COHORTS OF 85/86-YEAR-OLD FREE-LIVING MEN AND WOMEN, BORN TEN YEARS APART.**

### **Aims of Study**

The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of urinary incontinence and other urinary tract symptoms, the use of incontinence aids and how urinary incontinence influences daily life in two 85/86-year-old cohorts born ten years apart.

### **Methods**

Two random samples of 85/86-year-olds born in 1901/02 and 1911/12, respectively, participated. This study is part of the gerontological and geriatric population studies in Göteborg.

### **Results**

The prevalence of urinary incontinence among men was 20% in those born in 1901/02 and 29% in those born in 1911/12 and among women 52% in the first and 64% in the second cohort.

Weak stream among men was seen in 43% in those born 1901/02 and in those born 1911/12 it was 54%. Indwelling bladder catheter was used by 3% in both cohorts among men and 0% among women. Urinary incontinence influence on daily life was 9% in men in the first and 7% in the second cohort and among women the figures was 13% respectively 18%. There were no statistical differences between the two cohorts regarding urinary incontinence, weak stream among men, use of indwelling bladder catheter or urinary incontinence influence on daily life. Use of incontinence aids among men was 8% in both cohorts. The only difference between the two cohorts was regarding the use of incontinence aids where women born in 1901/02 used aids in 23% and women born in 1911/12 in 42% ( $p=0,002$ ).

### **Conclusions**

Urinary incontinence is common among older men and women. Old people may think incontinence is part of the normal aging process, and health care professionals may dismiss incontinence as not worthy of investigation and treatment. Urinary incontinence has been taboo for many people and many patients still attempt to hide their problem from their closest relatives and often refrain from telling their doctor about the problem.

Taboos on mentioning the bladder generally and incontinence in particular are gradually lifting in many cultures. Two decades ago it was almost impossible to have incontinence discussed in the media. Now, women's magazines, local and national papers, radio and even television cover the subject. In Sweden there has been an increasing awareness of urinary incontinence among women during the last 10-15 years. Older men, on the other hand, have not had the same opportunities as women and the taboos regarding urinary incontinence among men have lasted longer. There is still a more open attitude to female than male incontinence, and women find it easier to accept incontinence aids than men do.

In many other fields within the gerontological and geriatric population studies in Göteborg, sometimes marked cohort differences have been found, such as regarding cognitive function. In other fields, no such cohort differences were found, e.g. regarding hearing ability. Prevalence of urinary incontinence obviously belongs to the latter group.