

URINARY INCONTINENCE IN ICELANDIC WOMEN - A POPULATION STUDY.**Aims of Study**

Very little is known about the epidemiology of urinary incontinence in Icelandic women. Our aim was to determine the prevalence and types of urinary incontinence in a large national survey. The study also evaluated social consequence, effects on quality of life and treatment caused by this presumed common health problem.

Methods

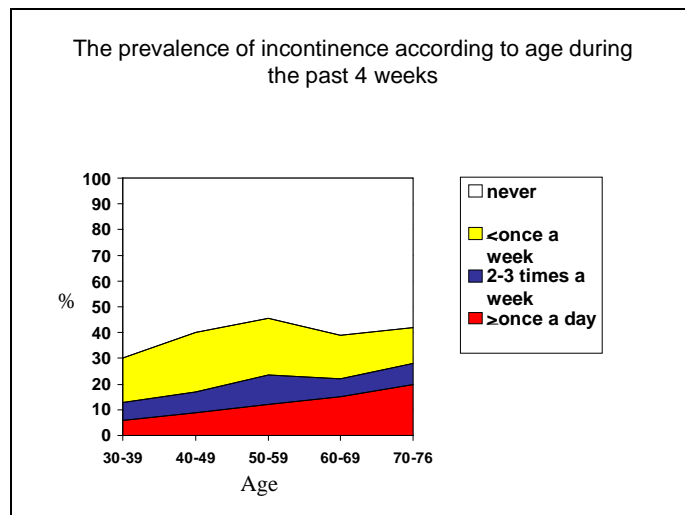
Ten thousand women in the age range 30-75 years old were randomly selected from the Icelandic national registry. This is about 14% of all women at this age's range living in the country. They received a mailed questionnaire and a letter explaining the aim of the study. Those who did not respond were invited to answer over the telephone. A validated four item (ICIQ short form) questionnaire was used assessing the prevalence, perceived causes and magnitude of urinary incontinence as well as effects on quality of life during the last 4 week.

The questionnaire was translated into Icelandic according to an agreed international methodology. Additional eleven questions were asked regarding treatment and costs.

Results

Out of 10.000 women, 7180 (75.1%) responded, 5280 by mail and 1900 by telephone. Of those, 38.4% reported symptoms of urinary incontinence in the last 4 weeks and 18.7% leaked urine at least two times a week. In 28.4% of responders, incontinence affected their quality of live (mean value 3.20 on the scale 1-10). Over all 60% had symptoms of stress urinary incontinence, 13% (had) pure urge incontinence and 27% had mixed symptoms. Older women (>60) had more leakage and in this group urge incontinence was more common compared to the younger women. Of those who had incontinence 34% claimed that the condition interfered with their social life but 16% with their sexual life.

Only 8% of responders (550) had sought treatment for incontinence, 57% surgical, 32% pelvic floor exercise and 16% medical treatment. The vast majority (77%) reported good response to the treatment.

**Conclusions**

Urinary incontinence is a highly prevalent condition affecting the quality of daily life in 28% of Icelandic women. The severity and urge incontinence increases with age but stress incontinence is by far the most common symptom. Very few women seek treatment for their disorder although many of them have a significant incontinence that would justify treatment.