

URINARY INCONTINENCE AND STRESS URINARY INCONTINENCE IN GERMANY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Aims of Study

The available literature on urinary incontinence (UI) in Germany is reviewed with focus on stress UI (SUI) to identify and collect epidemiological data of all types of UI and data on SUI treatment and treatment outcomes associated with SUI.

Methods

A search of UI literature relating to Germany was performed on MEDLINE, EMBASE, HealthSTAR, HSRProj, and HSTAT using the following search parameters: keywords (urinary incontinence, treatment, cost, incidence, prevalence, etc.), subheadings (aetiology, diagnosis treatment etc.), journals (JAMA, NEJM etc.), language (English), timeframe (1990 to date). Additionally, a local in-depth national literature review was performed.

Results

The most recent prevalence data for Germany show that about 4.0 to 4.5% of the population are suffering from UI. Around 56% of 50 year old patients presenting in GP practices are affected by UI. Data on prevalence (postmenopausal) show that 37% of the female patients with UI were suffering from SUI and 55% from mixed UI (MUI). The woman to man ratio show a broad range from 1.5:1 up to 3.7:1. The most prevalent condition underlying SUI is vaginal childbirth in woman and prostatic problems in men. Obesity seems to be a very important civilization-related risk factor for SUI. The association of UI with neurological disorders, diabetes, chronic bronchitis, and other disorders has been described. Generally, SUI is treated by gynecologists in women, and urologists in men. German guidelines give recommendations regarding diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. A stepwise treatment approach is recommended with conservative therapies (physical methods first, followed by drug therapy) surgery. Currently the treatment of SUI is not focused on pharmacotherapy. Only 25% of UI patients receive institutional care, the remainder is informally cared at home. Several self-help groups for incontinent persons exist in Germany. Data for health-related quality of life in SUI patients is rare and little information regarding the costs of the disease is available.

Conclusions

In Germany information regarding stress urinary incontinence (SUI) and urinary incontinence in general (UI) tends to focus on diagnosis and treatment. Data concerning epidemiology, patient behavior and compliance, economic impact, and outcome are rare. Health-economic data regarding urinary incontinence are strongly needed and will help to elucidate the quality and costs of the German Health System with regards to this widespread disease.