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Dyer R[1], Abdel-fattah M[1], Barrington J[1], Gobrial H[1]
1. Torbay Hospital

A SIMPLE VISUAL ANALOGUE SCALE TO ASSESS THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN WOMEN WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE

Aim of Study
A number of Quality of Life (QoL) assessment questionnaires are currently available. All of these questionnaires include questions regarding the general well-being of the patients and also specific aspects of patient's lives such as incontinence. A major drawback is that they take considerable time to be completed, which can be time consuming in already stretched outpatient clinics. The aim of this study was to determine whether a simple visual analogue scale, which we called an Incontinence Bothering Scale (IBSc), can reliably assess the quality of life in women with urinary incontinence.

Methods
All women referred with urinary incontinence to an Urodynamic clinic in a district general hospital in the South West of England during the period June 2002- January 2003 were invited to participate in the study. Women attending this clinic routinely completed a history sheet and Kings College Quality of Life Questionnaire (Kings QoL). Those who agreed to participate in the study were asked to complete in addition the Incontinence Bothering Scale (Appendix 1), they were simply asked to look at the scale and quantify how much was their urinary incontinence affecting their life? The results of the IBSc were then compared to the Kings QoL score as a validated, reliable and widely used questionnaire for QoL assessment. Hospital notes were examined for patient demography and to ascertain the urodynamics diagnosis.
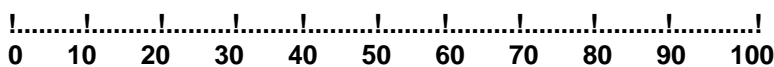
Results
One-hundred-and-forty five women with urinary incontinence participated in the study: one hundred and thirty two women correctly completed the questionnaires and the remaining 13 patients were excluded from the statistics. The mean age was 59.6 years (range 36-83). Fifty five patients (41.6%) were found to have urodynamic stress incontinence, 51 patients (38.6%) had detrusor over-activity, 13 patients (9.8%) had mixed incontinence and 13 patients (9.8%) had normal urodynamic assessment. Kings QoL questionnaire results were analysed; range: 5-94, mean: 52.03 and median: 52. The IBSc results were analysed; range 10-100, mean 69.12 and median: 70. The correlation between both scores was poor ($r = 0.66$) (Appendix 2).

Conclusion
This study has shown that a simple visual scale is not a reliable tool in assessing the QoL in women with urinary incontinence. A formal, validated and reliable QoL questionnaire is still the method of choice for QoL assessment, even if it takes longer to complete.

Appendix 1: IBSc Scale

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0      10      20      30      40      50      60      70      80      90      100
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Appendix 2: **Scatter for correlation of Kings QoL & IBSc**