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LIFE STYLE OF FEMALE PATIENTS PRESENTING WITH LUTS IN UROLOGY CENTRES IN ITALY: THE FLOW STUDY

Hypothesis / aims of study

The FLOW study (Female LUTS: Observational study in Women) is a 2-year prospective longitudinal non-interventional - currently ongoing – investigation, aimed at evaluating the clinical profile of Italian women suffering from LUTS in Urology Outpatients Clinics. The present paper reports on social and demographic patients characteristics, their habits and the relationship between patients' life style and LUTS. The LUTS impact on the quality of life was also evaluated by means of W-IPSS questionnaire.

Study design, materials and methods

Patients (age \geq 18 years, negative dipstick) suffering from LUTS since at least 3 months and regarded to be compliant with questionnaire compilation, were consecutively enrolled in 39 Italian Centres of Urology. They underwent a urological visit according to the routine procedures used at each centre. In order to describe patients life style the variables collected are: alcohol consumption, smoking, physical activity, wearing of high-heeled shoes, coffee consumption, body mass index (BMI) and sedentary or heavy work.

The only procedure prescribed by the protocol was the self-administration of W-IPSS questionnaire (International Prostate Symptom Score, adapted for women: the QoL single question refers to urinary symptoms generically, in spite of the specific reference to prostatic disease of the original IPSS). The present paper reports on data related to 934 patients. Significance level was fixed at 5%.

Results

The mean (SD) age was 53.5 (13.8) years and it was normally distributed. The large majority of patients have elementary diploma (35%), high school diploma (31%) and secondary school diploma (22%) and, as regards occupational condition, 41% are housewife, 31% employed and 20% retired.

Alcohol consumption was observed in 35% of total sample. Mixed urinary incontinence was slightly more frequently complained by women who consume alcoholic drinks rather than those who do not (36% versus 30% respectively) whereas an opposite pattern was observed in urge incontinence (23% Vs 29%). Other observed LUTS parameters (day time frequency, urgency and night time frequency) were slightly more frequent among patients who did not consume alcohol than those who did (73% Vs 66%, 71% Vs 64% and 63% Vs 56% respectively). The severity of symptoms as assessed by W-IPSS was not statistically different between drinkers and non drinkers (11.86 Vs 12.75), the same could not be said about QoL score which showed a statistically significant but small difference between them (3.97 Vs 4.2)

The majority of patients (65%) enrolled did not smoke: 24% were smokers or ex-smokers (11%) at the baseline visit. Smokers suffered more frequently from daytime frequency, urgency, incomplete emptying, than non smokers. Ex-smokers complained of night time frequency in 69% Vs 50% of smokers and 66% of non smokers. Urinary incontinence was present in 79% of ex-smokers vs 62% of smokers and 68% of non smokers. Concerning the severity of symptoms, as assessed by W-IPSS scores no statistically significant differences were detected among non smokers, ex-smokers and smokers (average symptom score ranging from 12.13 to 12.96; QoL score ranging from: 4.05 to 4.29).

Seventy – six percent of women did not practice physical activity. The absence of a regularly physical activity seemed to be associated with a more frequent presence of: urgency (63 % vs 69%), night time frequency (56% vs 62%) and incomplete emptying (43% vs 53%). On the other hand 47% of patients who practice physical activity complained of stress urinary incontinence. Thirty-three percent of women had a sedentary work but only 13.5% of them had heavy work. Patients who practice physical activity showed lower W-IPSS symptom and QoL scores when compared to those who had sedentary life: 10.55 Vs 12.98 and 3.91 Vs 4.16 respectively.

The majority of patients (82%) did not wear high-heels and almost 50% of women who wore high-heels suffered from stress urinary incontinence while as regards other LUTS no different pattern was evident. Finally the severity of symptoms was statistically higher in women who did not wear high-heeled shoes than those who did: 12.94 Vs 9.85. On the other hand QoL score showed no statistically significant difference between groups.

Interpretation of results

In general the five most frequent symptoms observed in each group of patients have always been: day time frequency, urgency, urinary incontinence, night time frequency and feeling of incomplete emptying. It seems that different lifestyles did not affect the kinds of symptoms complained by women. Rather, they have a different impact on symptoms severity and on LUTS-related QoL.

Concluding message

The physical activity is the only lifestyle which has an effect on both symptoms and related QoL. Nevertheless alcohol consumption have an impact only on QoL and high-heels only on symptom score. Further analysis should be performed in order to better understand the age influence on these variables.

FUNDING: Educational Funding by Boehringer Ingelheim Italy