589

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WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF LUTS ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE DURING PREGNANCY AND AFTER CHILDBIRTH?

Hypothesis / aims of study

Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) are common during pregnancy and the prevalence increases with gestational age until term. After delivery the prevalences of symptoms decreases promptly. It is known that LUTS affect the quality of life negatively outside pregnancy. To our knowledge we are the first to investigate the effect of LUTS on the quality of life during pregnancy and after childbirth. The objective of this study was to asses the association between LUTS and disease specific quality of life in nulliparous women during pregnancy and in the first year after childbirth.

Study design, materials and methods

At 12 weeks gestation, 257 nulliparous women were recruited from eight midwifery practices. They participated in a prospective longitudinal cohort study on the effects of pregnancy on pelvic floor function. The study was approved by Medical Ethics. All women signed an informed consent. Participants received four self-report questionnaires. Questionnaires were sent during pregnancy at 12 and 36 weeks gestation. Two questionnaires were sent at 3 and 12 months after delivery. One woman did not answer the UDI in the first questionnaire. Nine women did not answer the UDI in the third questionnaire. Excluded were 51 women who delivered before 36 weeks gestation and 32 women because they were pregnant within 1 year after delivery. Urogenital symptoms were measured with the Urogenital Distress Inventory (UDI). [1,2] This questionnaire contains 19 questions about micturition symptoms and the experienced level of discomfort of these symptoms. Each item measures if a symptom is present and the amount of bother the woman experiences from that symptom. Urogenital symptoms were assessed according to the recommendations of the ICS, and in concordance with other studies.
Disease-specific quality of life score was assessed with the Dutch translation of the Incontinence Impact Questionnaire (IIQ). [1,2] The IIQ measures the impact of urogenital symptoms on five aspects of the quality of life: physical functioning, emotional functioning, mobility, social functioning and embarrassment. The total score of these domains was used in this study. The IIQ score ranges 0 – 100. A higher score indicates a worse quality of life. The statistical analysis was done in SPSS 10.0 for Windows.

Results

The mean age was 30,2 (SD 3,7) and the mean Body Mass Index was 23,8 (3,7). Table 1 shows the effect of LUTS on health-related quality of life.
The QOL of women who said to have symptoms of overactive bladder, urge-incontinence and stress-incontinence were compared to women who did not have these symptoms. As shown in table 1 these two groups differ significantly in most symptoms. In all symptoms the disease specific quality of live ameliorates after delivery. Urge-incontinence seems to have the most impact on disease specific quality of live.

Interpretation of results

Women with urogenital symptoms have statistical significant lower quality of live during pregnancy and one year postpartum than women without these symptoms. After birth there is still a statistical significant higher score in women with symptoms, although the scores are very low.
Apparently the effect of urogenital symptoms on quality of live is low.

Concluding message

Women who have overactive bladder, urge- or stress-incontinence symptoms during pregnancy and one year after delivery report a statistical significant lower quality of live. However, the reported amount of bother remains strikingly low, even in the group of women with symptoms, which makes the clinical significancy highly debatable.

Table 1

		IIQ total score		
		Symptoms	No Symptoms	
12 weeks gestation	Overactive Bladder	4.15 (7.13)	1.46 (2.92)	p=0.000
	Urge-incontinence	12.29 (13.46)	2.20 (4.18)	p=0.012
	Stress-incontinence	4.53 (8.85)	2.50 (4.46)	NS
36 weeks gestation	Overactive Bladder	6.72 (11.47)	4.89 (9.52)	NS
	Urge-incontinence	14.21 (17.89)	3.70 (5.91)	p=0.000
	Stress-incontinence	8.37 (13.44)	3.64 (6.31)	p=0.002
3 months postpartum	Overactive Bladder	10.86 (15.13)	2.43 (5.21)	p=0.031
	Urge-incontinence	6.36 (9.52)	2.50 (6.20)	p=0.025
	Stress-incontinence	5.39 (8.29)	2.23 (6.21)	p=0.009
12 months postpartum	Overactive Bladder	3.02 (4.19)	2.36 (5.33)	NS
	Urge-incontinence	4.77 (7.26)	2.02 (4.44)	p=0.040
	Stress-incontinence	3.91 (6.57)	1.39 (3.24)	p=0.001

IIQ total score 0-100 (standard deviation), NS= not significant

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