

IMPACT OF URINARY INCONTINENCE IN FEMALE SEXUALITY

Hypothesis / aims of study

The frequency of urinary incontinence is at least 20% of healthy middle-aged women. It is important that incontinence symptoms be treated since it impacts not only the physiological, but also psychological realms of those women. Researchers and clinicians are increasingly aware of the importance of identifying urinary incontinence and in particular that causes distress or adversely effects health-related quality of life among women.

Study design, materials and methods

From August 2002 to January 2003, 30 patients with urinary incontinence ranged from 31 to 51 years old (mean 43 years) underwent a quality of life questionnaire in order to evaluate the distress produced by this condition in social life, self-esteem and sexual parameters.

were interviewed. All had had at least one vaginal delivery and the middle time of complain was 53 months. The patients answered two questionnaires: Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) and a portuguese validated questionnaire for incontinence and sexual assessment. Statistical analysis were done with Wilcoxon test.

Results

The most patients were married and all of them had just one partner. Important difference in social status was not found. Urine loss produced negative impact in social domain in 43% of the patients, 29% in self-esteem and 57% in sexuality. As far as sexual life, there were mild impact in 10%, moderate in 13% and severe in 36% of the incontinent women. The overall impact is presented in figure 1. The main problem related with incontinence was the bad odor together with pad use (43%). The second was the urinary leakage (40%) and the other complains were: surgery necessity, stress urinary incontinence, frequency and urinary leakage during sexual activity. Twenty-three patients (76,67%) reported episodes of urinary leakage at sexual intercourse. In this group, seventeen (74%) considered it a bad influence in their lives and eleven (64,71%) related it as severe. Seventeen (56,67%) changed the sexual frequency, related as a negative interference. The Wilcoxon test showed a significative difference of sexual relationship before and after starting the urinary incontinence ($p < 0,001$).

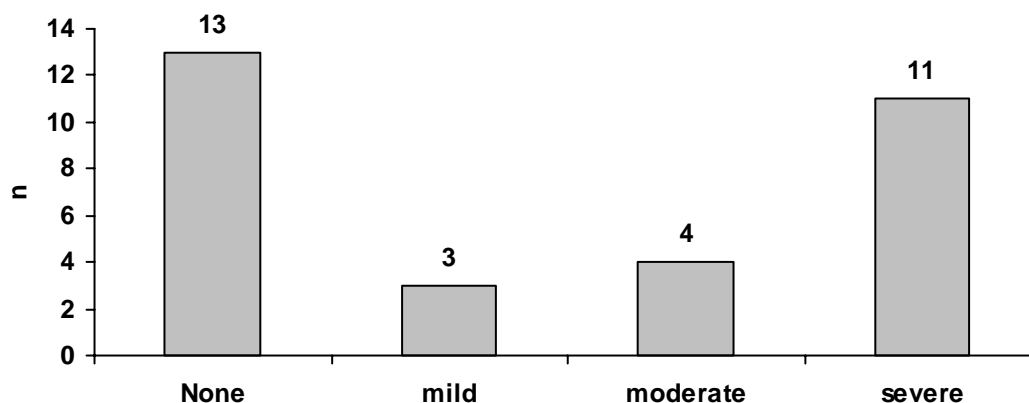


Figure 1. Impact of urinary incontinence in female sexuality

Interpretation of results

The urinary incontinence bothers the sexual life of these patients. Besides, affect other areas not direct related with sexual intercourse.

Concluding message

The management of urinary incontinence must include the evaluation of self-esteem, social and sexual life for improvement the quality of life.