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SEXUAL FUNCTION IN WOMEN BEFORE AND AFTER SUBURETHRAL SLING OPERATION FOR STRESS URINARY INCONTINENCE.

Hypothesis / aims of study

The aim of this retrospective clinical questionnaire study was to see how incontinence affected sexuality in women, to examine the sexuality of women before and after a suburethral operation and to see if there were any adverse effects of the operation on sexuality.

Study design, materials and methods

During a period of 4 ½ years 84 patients were operated with TVT (61 patients) or IVS (23 patients) for stress urinary incontinence. One patient had died and 83 patients received a questionnaire. The patients were asked whether they were sexually active before the operation and if not whether the incontinence was a reason for not being sexually active. The same questions concerning the postoperative period were asked. Furthermore the patients were asked whether their sexual life had improved, deteriorated or was the same after the operation.

Results

A total of 67 patients out of 83 eligible (81%) answered the questionnaire.

Fourteen patients (21%) were not sexually active before the operation. One patient cited incontinence as the reason and was sexually active after the operation.

Fifty-three patients (79%) were sexually active before the operation and 26 (49%) experienced incontinence during intercourse whereas 27 (51%) patients were continent during intercourse.

In the group of 26 with incontinence during intercourse before the operation 3 patients were without partners after the operation, 19 patients were continent during intercourse with 10 (53%) citing an improved sexual life, 7 (37%) an unchanged sexual life and 2 (10%) a decreased libido and worse sexual life. Four patients were still not continent during intercourse and experienced an unchanged sexual life.

Of the 27 patients without incontinence during intercourse before the operation two patients were not sexually active after the operation and cited less libido as the reason. Of the remaining 25 patients 22 (88%) had an unchanged sexual life, 2 patients (8%) a better sexual life and one patient (4%) a worse sexual life.

No patients developed de novo urinary incontinence during intercourse.

A total of five patients cited a worse sexual life after the operation. Two of these patients wrote that they felt the operation to be the cause the others cited cerebral thrombosis, age and unknown reason as the causes.

Interpretation of results

Almost half of the patients with stress urinary incontinence experienced incontinence during intercourse. Half of the patients who were cured of their incontinence during intercourse had a better sexual life after the operation. Eight percent of the patients without incontinence during intercourse before the operation experienced a better sexual life after the operation. No patients developed de novo incontinence during intercourse after the operation. Five patients cited reduced libido after the operation but only two patients (3%) felt the operation to be the cause

Concluding message

The successful suburethral sling operation improves the sexual lives of patients. The risk of adverse effects is very low.