

ADVANCED PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE DECREASES BODY IMAGE AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Hypothesis / aims of study

Women who seek treatment for pelvic organ prolapse strive for an improvement in quality of life. Body image has been shown to be an important component of differences in quality of life. To date, there are no data on body image in patients with advanced pelvic organ prolapse. Our objective was to compare body image and quality of life in women with advanced pelvic organ prolapse (POP) to normal controls.

Study design, materials and methods

We used a case-control study design. Cases were defined as subjects presenting to a tertiary urogynecology clinic with advanced pelvic organ prolapse (Stage 3 or 4). Controls were defined as subjects presenting to a tertiary care gynecology or women's health clinic for an annual visit with normal pelvic floor support (Stage 0 or 1) without urinary incontinence. All patients completed a valid and reliable body image scale and a generalized (SF-12) and condition-specific (PFDI-20) quality of life scale. Linear and logistic regression analyses were performed to adjust for possible confounding variables.

Results

Forty-seven case and 51 control subjects were enrolled. After controlling for age, race, parity, previous hysterectomy, and medical comorbidities, subjects with advanced POP were more likely to feel self-conscious (adj. OR 4.7; 95% CI 1.4 to 18, $p=0.02$), less likely to feel physically attractive (adj. OR 11; 95%CI 2.9 to 51, $p<0.001$), less likely to feel feminine (adj. OR 4.0; 95%CI 1.2 to 15, $p=0.03$), and less likely to feel sexually attractive (adj. OR 4.6; 95%CI 1.4 to 17, $p=0.02$) than normal controls. The groups were similar in their feeling of dissatisfaction with appearance when dressed, difficulty looking at themselves naked, avoiding people because of appearance, and overall dissatisfaction with their body. Subjects with advanced POP suffered significantly lower quality of life on the physical scale of the SF-12 (mean 42; 95%CI 39 to 45 vs. mean 50; 95%CI 47 to 53, $p<0.009$). However, no differences between groups were noted on the mental scale of the SF-12 (mean 51; 95%CI 50 to 54 vs. mean 50; 95%CI 47 to 52, $p=0.56$). Additionally, subjects with advanced POP scored significantly worse on the prolapse, urinary, and colorectal scales and overall summary score of PFDI-20 than normal controls (mean summary score 104; 95%CI 90 to 118 vs. mean 29; 95%CI 16 to 43, $p<0.0001$) indicating a decrease in condition-specific quality of life. Worsening body image correlated with lower quality of life on both the physical and mental scales of the SF-12, as well as the prolapse, urinary, and colorectal scales, and overall summary score of PFDI-20 in subjects with advanced POP.

Interpretation of results

Advanced pelvic organ prolapse decreases a woman's body image and overall quality of life.

Concluding message

Body image may be a key determinant for quality of life in patients with advanced prolapse. Women may seek care in an effort to improve their body image making this a potentially important outcome measure for treatment evaluation in clinical trials.