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MEASURING URINARY OUTCOMES AFTER RADICAL PROSTATECTOMY – THE NEED FOR A SIMPLE STANDARD

Hypothesis / aims of study
The most common criteria used to evaluate continence post procedure in radical prostatectomy series is the freedom from use of pads at a set time after the procedure (usually one year). Some series have reported freedom from use of pads as high as 97% one year after radical prostatectomy [1]. Based on self-reported questionnaire data, it has previously been demonstrated that different definitions of continence give different results when applied to the same patients at the same time [2]. However, we have observed variations in reports of postoperative urinary continence when using the same definition (no pads) but changing the number of answering options patients are given for a similar question. The aim of this study was to compare the cumulative self-completed recovery of urinary continence after laparoscopic radical prostatectomy (LPP) performed at one institution by one of two surgeons between patients who replied a 3-option versus a 6-option question regarding the use of protective pads postoperatively.

Study design, materials and methods
One hundred and fifty one consecutive preoperatively continent patients consented to answer a quality of life questionnaire postoperatively between October 2002 and May 2005. All patients underwent a LPP by one of two surgeons. Urinary continence was defined as no leak and no use of diapers or pads. The first 38 answered a 3-option question (see below) while the subsequent 113 were given 6-options to answer the same question. Kaplan Meyer curves were generated to estimate time to continence and the one year pad free rate was recorded. The question was the following:
How many pads or adult diapers per 24-hour period did you use to control urinary leakage during the last four weeks?
Answering options for the first group: (Group A - 3 options)
1- No pads or adult diapers or no leakage
2- 1-2 pads or adult diapers per 24-hour period
3- 3 or more pads or adult diapers per 24-hour period
Answering options for the second group: (Group B - 6 options)
1- None or no leakage
2- An occasional pad or protective material
3- 1 pads or adult diapers per 24-hour period
4- 2 pads or adult diapers per 24-hour period
5- 3 or more pads or adult diapers per 24-hour period
6- Adult diaper (s)

Results
Figures 1 and 2 show the KM curves the 1-year cumulative incidence of "no pad or no leakage" status after LRP for the 3 and the 6 answering option groups, respectively. Using the questionnaire for group A, the one year freedom from pad usage rate was 75%, whereas using the questionnaire for Group B, the one year freedom from pad usage rate was 53%.

Fig 1	Fig. 2
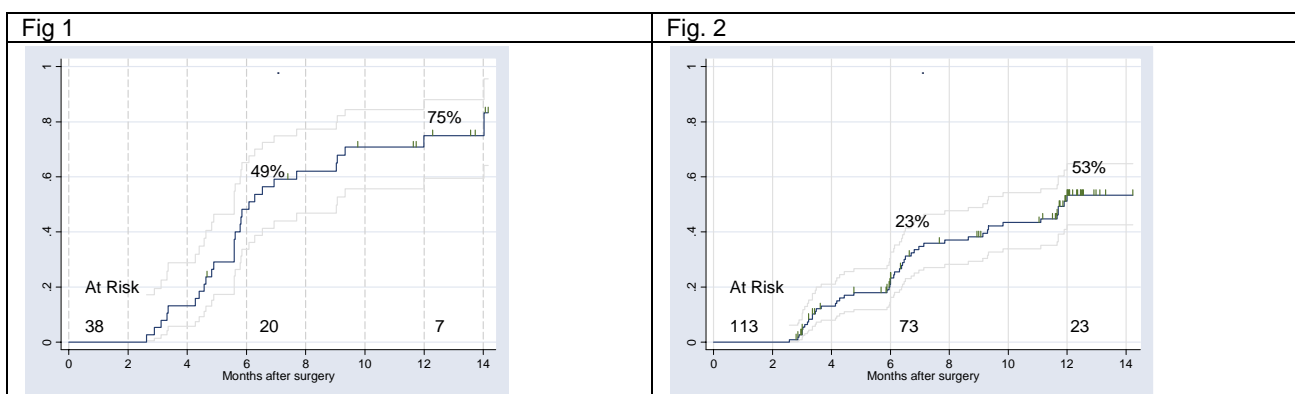
Interpretation of results
Without changing the strict definition of continence, cumulative continence rate decreased among patients who had a higher number of answering options. While it is statistically invalid to compare the two curves, to the lay person it would appear that the patients in group A had better outcomes than those in group B, a highly unlikely scenario given the fact that both groups were operated on by the same surgeons using the same technique. Even with self-reported questionnaires, the answering options can change results. This should be considered when comparing continence results from different series and different institutions.

Concluding message
Generation of a simple validated continence questionnaire that can be applied easily in the setting of prostatectomy is needed to make comparisons among different series more reliable.

References
1. BJU Intl. 97:467, 2006
2. BJU Intl. 95:530, 2005