

## INTRODUCTION

For many, urinary incontinence (UI) is an embarrassing condition with an adverse effect on quality of life (QoL). Despite a wide range of available treatments, many women delay seeking healthcare or do not seek it at all and instead rely on the use of containment products to manage their incontinence<sup>1</sup>. 77-87% of community dwelling women with incontinence regularly use pads regardless of treatment received<sup>2</sup>. Whilst it may be assumed that the use of pads is an effective means by which social continence is achieved, there is little evidence on the extent to which their use is associated with any impact on QoL.

## OBJECTIVES

- Assess the feasibility of conducting a formal trial on pad use and quality of life in women
- Provide insight into women's perceptions of urinary incontinence and pad usage

## METHODS

**Design:** Quasi-experimental, mixed methods study

### Participants:

- Recruited using print and digital media
- Community dwelling women ≥18 years with UI and had not previously used pads were included
- Women with faecal incontinence or cognitive impairment were excluded
- Based upon the effect size in previous literature<sup>3</sup>, a sample size of 23 women was required

### Phase 1: Quantitative (n=22)

- Of 95 women screened, 24 were included with 2 drop-outs
- Each woman received a six-week supply of pads
- Questionnaires on demographics, UI symptoms, UI severity, and QoL were administered at baseline and six weeks later
- Descriptive and comparative statistics were completed using SPSS v24.0

Procedure	Baseline	6 Weeks
Demographics	X	
ICI FLUTS-LF	X	X
Sandvik Index	X	X
EQ-5D	X	X
ICI LUTS-QoL	X	X
PADPROM		X

### Phase 2: Qualitative (n=15)

- Convenience sampling from phase 2 participants
- Data Collection: Audio recorded interviews using a semi-structured interview guide transcribed verbatim
- Data Analysis: First interview was independently coded by two researchers and compared to develop a coding framework. The remaining interviews were analyzed using a content analysis approach, adding new codes as they were identified. The codes were then collapsed into categories and finally themes.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Demographics of survey respondents (n = 22)**

Mean Age ± SD (years)	62 ± 16.9
Duration of UI (years)	
≤ 1	5
1-2	5
2-5	5
> 5	7
Severity of UI	
Mild	0
Moderate	16
Severe	5
Very Severe	1

**Table 2: Mean scores at baseline and six weeks**

	Baseline	6 Weeks	p
	Mean (SD)		
ICI LUTS-QoL	35.6 (6.9)	33.8 (10.9)	0.232
EQ-5D VAS	77.7(13.7)	79.9 (12.9)	0.360
EQ-5D Index	0.829 (0.11)	0.809 (0.14)	0.266

Mean change in ICIQ-LUTSQoL total score (1.81) resulted in an effect size, d, of 0.23, giving a required sample size for a fully powered trial of 151 women (power 0.82, alpha 0.05).

**Table 3: Qualitative findings (n = 15)**

Theme	Categories	Exemplar Quotes
Safety and Security	Psychological state Being able to do more Preventative peeing	SI-01: "I find that security helps me, I did not used to have that. Just because I know it's there."
Perceptions of Incontinence and Wearing Pads	Significance of the problem Stigma	SI-15: "A lot of it is like pride, like 'I'm not there yet, I'm not there yet, I'm not that old, I'm not going to deal with it that way.' So yeah, I think it's more pride."
Navigating the Conversation	Family and friends Seeking help and information	SI-15: "Just with very specific people...with one friend it was a definite sort of back-off type signal and then with another I found out she was using [pads] and it led to a discussion..." SI-10: "I have discussed it with my family physician but they didn't really say anything so I just thought I've got to look after myself."
The Right Design	Finding what works for me Bulk and shape Smell, irritation and absorbency	SI-13: "...I do see myself continuing to wear them but finding and experimenting with different products and finding what works for me."

## CONCLUSIONS

- A formal effect size calculation results in useful knowledge for the planning of a formal, fully powered trial.
- Finding first-time pad users proved difficult. This may be due to the wide availability and marketing of female continence products, the familiarity women have with pads for menstruation, and the common perception that UI is a normal part of ageing or womanhood.
- The use of pads for UI has a positive effect on women's QoL but the ability of formal measures to detect meaningful change should be questioned.
- The use of mixed methods provided deeper insight into women's perceptions and attitudes towards UI and pad usage.

## REFERENCES

1. Fam Pract. 2004 Dec;21(6):689-96.
2. Journal of wound, ostomy, and continence nursing : official publication of The Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society. 1999 Jul;26(4):207-8, 10-3.
3. Neurourology and urodynamics. 2015 Nov;34(8):747-51.