

CONTAINMENT PRODUCTS AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN MEN WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE: AN EXPLORATORY, QUALITATIVE STUDY

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BACKGROUND

Urinary incontinence (UI) is a common condition, which has a substantial impact on quality of life (QoL). UI is perceived as debilitating from a physical, psychological and social point of view, it may cause both isolation and loss of independence [1]. Whereas wearing continence pads in women with bladder control problems is common and perhaps more accepted, in men it is less so [2], Even small mounts of incontinence is associate with high levels of bother in men with post prostatectomy incontinence. Containment with absorbent products may be an option for men with unresolved incontinence, although little is known about to what extent men seek out this method of management although there has recently been an increase in advertisements of pads specifically for men. While it may be assumed that pad usage is an effective means to achieve social continence, there is little evidence on men's attitudes towards pad use.

OBJECTIVES

This exploratory study, through utilization of qualitative analysis, aimed to assess attitudes and experiences of pad use in men with urinary incontinence.

METHODS

Design: Exploratory qualitative study

Participants: Men were recruited for a feasibility study via a poster campaign in Edmonton and the surrounding area, urologist referrals, print advertising, social media campaigns, and radio advertising. After 6 weeks in the feasibility study, participants were invited to take part in one to one interviews focused on their experience.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Men ≥ 18 years
- Have urinary incontinence
- Never used pads prior to the feasibility study to manage their incontinence

Exclusion Criteria:

- Faecal incontinence
- Cognitive impairment that would interfere with study procedures

Methods:

Demographic data of participants were gathered. The semi-structured interview guide was created focusing on perceptions of utility, benefits and disadvantages of containment products. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. All identifying information was removed at the transcription stage. The first interview was independently coded by two researchers and compared to develop a coding framework. One researcher coded the remaining 10 interviews, adding new codes as they were identified. The coded data were then analyzed by three researchers, collapsed into categories, and subsequently themes.

RESULTS

Themes and Categories	Exemplar Quotes
Perceptions of Incontinence - I feel abnormal - It's a women's thing - Normalizing incontinence	MA-07: "... I feel abnormal. Normal people they don't have to worry about going to the washroom and finding a washroom when they need to go." MA-04: "...you never see it or hear it talked about like you never hear about it, like it's never shown that it's an issue for men."
The experience of wearing pads - Confidence and safety - Positive effects - No significant effects	MA-02: "Wearing pads will not stop what you're doing; it does not restrict you, your social life, or what you do. It boosts your morale. I have the confidence now with what I am going to do." MA-11: "There is absolutely no difference. I do what I do. If the pads interfered in any way, shape, or form then I wouldn't wear them."
Experimenting - Experimenting - Fit	MA-02: "Yeah when I first wore them, it was a little awkward and all ... It takes a little adjustment." MA-07: "I feel boxers are not safe, it doesn't stick well enough."
Taking a Risk - Discussing incontinence and pad use - Help seeking	MA-08: "Unless you got a significant other then who else is going to know? It's not that you're going to walk into the front door and scream it to everyone." MA-11: "[My family physician] basically said as long as it doesn't get too harsh or too bad then it's just a condition you're going to have to live with."

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Men in this study were of the opinion that UI made them abnormal. This may be influenced by the focus on women's incontinence in product advertisements and from other sources of health information. Some participants attempted to deal with the social discomfort of being incontinent by trying to normalize it or associate it with aging. When discussing the experience of wearing pads, men described a feeling of confidence due to control of odour and being able to take part in more activities. This achievement of social continence was one of the most important aspects of their pad use, and many indicated that they would continue to wear them in the future. While the opportunity to try pads as a means of addressing their incontinence was a positive experience, no-one indicated that they would seek further assessment and treatment beyond this degree of management. This may be linked to having had their concerns previously dismissed by physicians. As these men had no previous experience with using absorbent products, it is not surprising they had to experiment with pad fit, placement, and even changing their undergarment style to accommodate the pads.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows stigma associated with UI and pad use among men stemming from sex related interpretations of what it means to be incontinent and whom incontinence affects. Pad use became more acceptable after an opportunity to try them. Healthcare professionals should be aware of not dismissing concerns about incontinence as this may discourage men from seeking assessment and treatment. Men's attitudes towards incontinence and use of absorbent products needs further attention from continence researchers.

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- The pads in this study were provided by Essity Health and Hygiene AB.