

## HOW HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IDENTIFY AND TREAT WOMAN WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE

### Hypothesis / aims of study

The aim of this study was to investigate how health professionals that work with women in the public healthcare system (primary care) approach and manage the urinary incontinence (UI) cases.

### Study design, materials and methods

The present research was developed in a transversal, exploratory and descriptive manner. The subjects were nurses, family physicians, general practitioners and gynecologists that work at the primary care public units in Campinas, State of Sao Paulo, Brazil. The questionnaire constructed for this study and used for data collection was pre-tested in a group of seven health professionals. After this, 413 questionnaires were sent by mail to the units and 123 (29.8%) returned, but only 56 were completed. The data was inserted in a database, using the program EPI-INFO 6.0, having being revised as to their consistency and completion before proceeding to the analysis. The sample's characterization variables and the answers to the closed questions were analyzed descriptively, calculating the relative and absolute frequencies when pertinent. The answers to the open questions were categorized and presented in tables.

### Results

The sample was composed by 37 (66.1%) clinicians and 19 nurses (33.9%). The presence of UI was investigated during consultation by 47.4% of the nurses, 50% of the family physicians or general practitioners and 100% of the gynecologists. Only three professionals did not know the ICS definition of IU, but they demonstrate little knowledge about the different types of IU, except in relation to stress incontinence, and also some confusion between risk factors, symptoms and types of IU. They referred different conducts; the gynecologists cited more frequently the surgical procedures and the nurses, the conservative treatment, management of the problem or referral to a specialist. Few professionals correlated the conduct with the type of IU.

### Interpretation of results

The presence of IU could be more frequently investigated at the primary care because it has high prevalence and affects the quality of life. The data analysis allowed the observation that the professionals have approached the women about the UI problem, but sometimes they do not know what conduct to adopt to face the problem, or yet when adopted the conducts are not always the most adequate ones. As it is not common that women seek treatment for IU at primary care public units, there are a several opportunities to approach the women: at medical or nursing consultation of routine, during the Pap test collection or prenatal consultation. It is necessary to offer continued education to the health professionals concerning IU symptoms, types of IU and forms of treatment. Nurses have an important role because they are ubiquitously present at the units and have several opportunities to evaluate, identify the problem and to implement the conservative treatment, and/or to refer to a specialist continence service to improve the condition of incontinent patients. More women could be benefited and more complex cases could be identified, eliciting possible medical and specialized treatment as it is actually necessary.

### Concluding message

Although IU is investigated in the primary care, this doesn't happen in the adequate frequency, although there are many opportunities do so. The concept of IU was known, but the knowledge about the matter is insufficient, evincing the necessity of continued education to the non-gynecologist or non-specialist professionals.

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<b><i>Is this a clinical trial?</i></b>	<b>No</b>
<b><i>What were the subjects in the study?</i></b>	<b>HUMAN</b>
<b><i>Was this study approved by an ethics committee?</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b><i>Specify Name of Ethics Committee</i></b>	<b>Committee of Ethics and Researches - State University of Campinas - UNICAMP / University Medical Sciences</b>
<b><i>Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b><i>Was informed consent obtained from the patients?</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>