

BLADDER AND RECTAL ASPECTS OF SPINAL CORD INJURY: RESULTS FROM THE CENSUS PERFORMED IN A DISTRICT OF NORTH-EAST OF ITALY

Hypothesis / aims of study

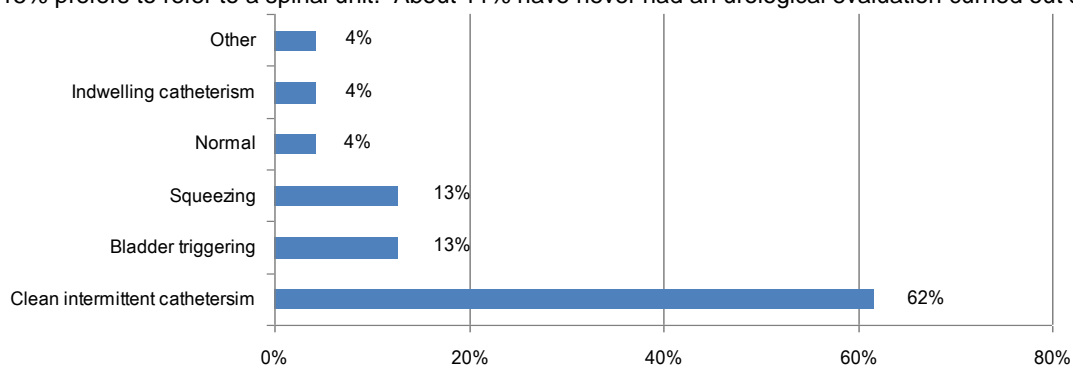
In Italy the prevalence of spinal cord injury (SCI) is still unknown (1). The aim of our study was to census the SCI patients in our district. Hereby we report the data obtained by a questionnaire distributed through the general practitioners (GPS) with particular regards to bladder and bowel aspects.

Study design, materials and methods

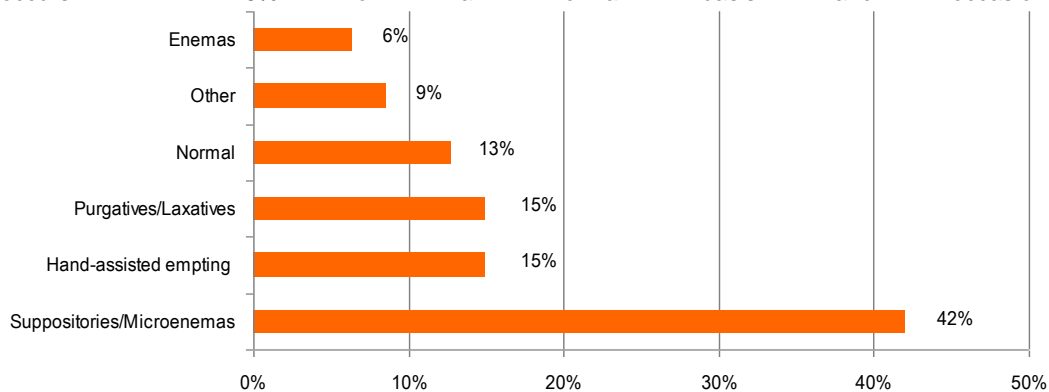
In 2008 all the GPS of the district were contacted by mail (1-3 times). They were asked if they had SCI patients, their number and then they were invited to administer to each SCI patient a self-assessment questionnaire consisting of 42 items. The questionnaire enquired about demoscopic data, features of SCI, bladder and rectal management, sexual aspects, hobbies and sports performed, use of public buildings and the quality of life (QoL). 82 SCI patients (pts) were recruited and 47 of them (57%) completed the questionnaire.

Results

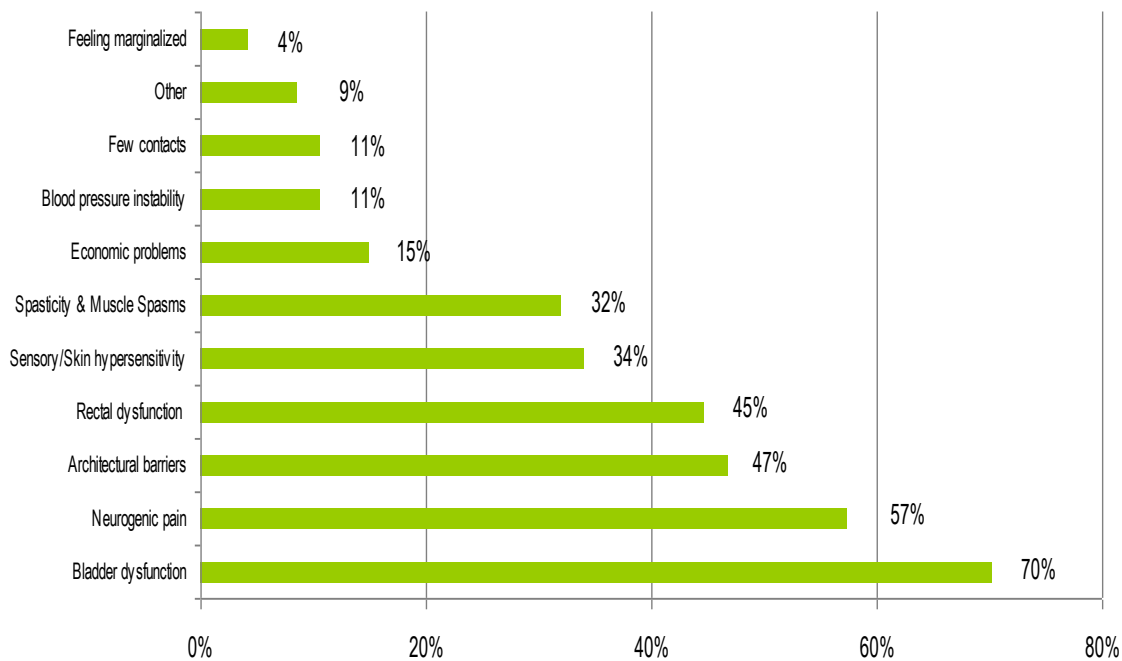
Bladder management: See the picture below. 25% of the interviewed people uses pads and 35% of males needs urocondoms. 74% of subjects have undergone at least 1 urological visit per year and 72% of them refers to the local urology department, while 15% prefers to refer to a spinal unit. About 11% have never had an urological evaluation carried out since hospital discharge.



Rectal management : See the picture below. 13% of patients reports normal defecation and 72% constipation . Fecal incontinence occurs in 6% on a normal basis and occasionally in 36%.



Quality of life (QoL): Bladder dysfunction is the problem that mostly interferes with QoL for 70% of subjects, followed by neurogenic pain (57%), architectural barriers (47%) and then rectal dysfunction (45%) - See the below picture "Problems that mostly interfere with quality of life (with possibility of multiple choiche)"



Interpretation of results

The prevalence of SCI detected is surely underestimated and this could depend on the partial co-operation of GPS. The distribution of causes of SCI presents, as expected, a majority of road accidents in young males. The data obtained from the questionnaires exhibit that most of SCI people in our district perform CIC and are used to undergoing regular urological check-ups in the local neuro-urological unit. These data suggest a high level of information on urological risks and also a mean good compliance to therapies, probably due to the high impact of bladder dysfunctions on QoL and also to the availability in loco of a neuro-urological centre. It is also likely that this survey had selected especially motivated SCI people. This preventive behaviour is more significant when consider that urological problems are the most frequent complications reported in literature (2). The most common rectal dysfunction is constipation while fecal incontinence is unusual.

Concluding message

The majority of the sample of SCI pts assessed report a good management of bladder dysfunction. Sphincteric dysfunctions, and especially the bladder ones, are perceived as the most invalidating aspect of their condition.

References

1. M. C. Pagliacci, M. G. Celani, M. Zampolini, L. Spizzichino, M. Franceschini, S. Baratta, G. Finali, G. Gatta, L. Perdon, for the Gruppo Italiano Studio Epidemiologico Mielolesioni - An Italian Survey of Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury - Arch Phys Med Rehabil Vol 84, September 2003
2. M C Pagliacci, M Franceschini, B Di Clemente, M Agosti, L Spizzichino on behalf of GISEM (Gruppo Italiano Studio Epidemiologico Mielolesioni) - A multicentre follow-up of clinical aspects of traumatic spinal cord injury - Spinal Cord (2007) 45, 404–410

Specify source of funding or grant	Nothing
Is this a clinical trial?	No
What were the subjects in the study?	HUMAN
Was this study approved by an ethics committee?	No
This study did not require ethics committee approval because	only survey with respect of privacy
Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?	Yes
Was informed consent obtained from the patients?	Yes