

Barriers to seek help when pelvic organ prolapse is a recurrent problem: a focus group study

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Aim of the study

Pelvic organ prolapse (POP) is often a recurrent condition. There is a lack of information about help-seeking behaviour in women suffering from recurrent POP. The aim of this focus group study was to **identify factors** that determine the **help seeking behaviour of women with recurrent POP**.

Design, materials and methods

Focus groups were compiled from the POP-UP cohort study¹. This study reviewed the long-term prevalence of POP after laparoscopic or vaginal hysterectomy. Women with recurrent POP who did not consult a physician were selected.

Prior to the focus group discussions, a group of four urogynecologists agreed on **seven hypothetical themes** for not seeking medical care:

(1) Personal factors, (2) previous treatment, (3) knowledge, (4) perception of current symptoms, (5) social environment, (6) accessibility, and (7) logistic factors.

A **funnel design** was chosen to moderate the focus group discussions. The discussions were audio-recorded, anonymized and transcribed using **Atlas.ti9**, based on a coding scheme.

Concluding message

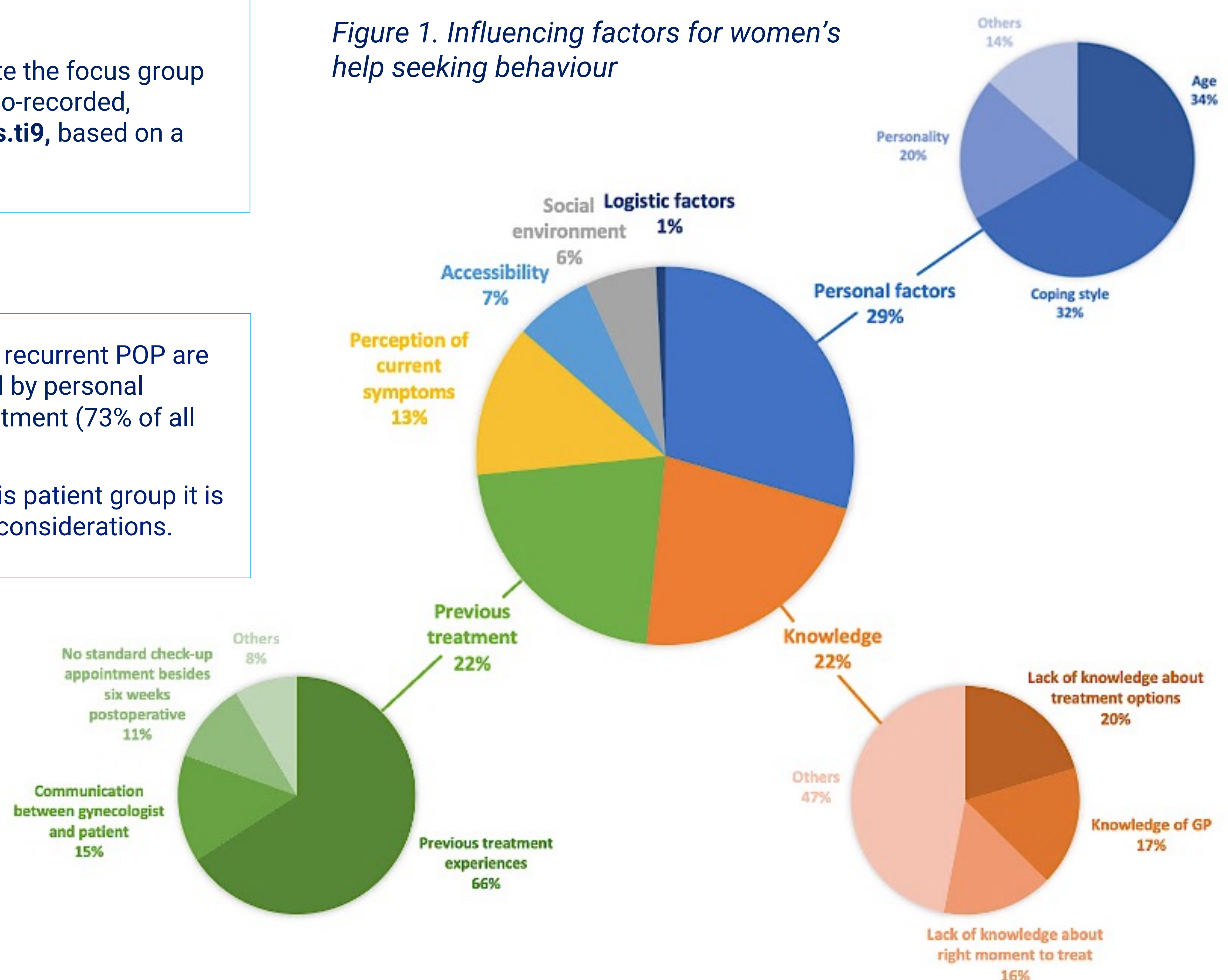
- Barriers to seek help for women with recurrent POP are **multifactorial** and mostly determined by personal factors, knowledge and previous treatment (73% of all answers).
- In order to provide **optimal care** to this patient group it is important to know their barriers and considerations.

Results

Twenty women with a mean age of 66 years (range 60-80 years) participated in three focus groups.

- Personal factors** were most important, e.g., age, coping style and personal characteristics like postponing, avoiding, minimizing, or serving attitude.
- Previous treatment** was important in case the experience was negative.
- Lack of **knowledge** about treatment options, of the general practitioner and about the right moment to treat were mentioned.
- Perception of current symptoms** were mostly less compared to preoperative complaints.
- A taboo on discussing POP symptoms was experienced within the **social environment**.
- Lack of **accessibility** to the GP mattered.
- Logistic factors** were hardly mentioned.

Figure 1. Influencing factors for women's help seeking behaviour



References

- Vermeulen, C. K. M. et al. (2020). Pelvic organ prolapse after laparoscopic hysterectomy compared with vaginal hysterectomy: the POP-UP study. International Urogynecology Journal, 32(4), 841–850. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00192-020-04591-z>