

THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF OPIATES IN WOMEN WITH URINARY RETENTION-OBSERVATIONS FROM A PROSPECTIVE CLINICAL STUDY

Hypothesis / aims of study

Urinary retention in women often presents a puzzling scenario: the aetiology may remain unidentified after excluding structural and neurological causes (1). This study prospectively evaluates this group of patients who have been referred on to a specialist centre.

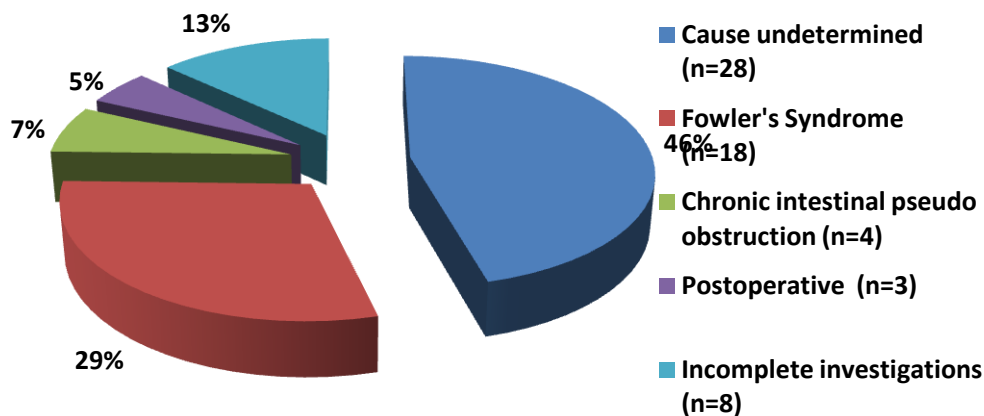
Study design, materials and methods

Between January and December 2008, 61 women with complete urinary retention were seen at a tertiary referral centre. Urological and neurological investigations locally had failed to reveal abnormalities but at our centre, urethral pressure profile, sphincter volume measurement and, in some cases, urethral sphincter EMG were carried out.

Results

The mean age of 61 women was 38.6 years (range 18-88 years). From their history, 21 had possible antecedent events: pelvic (n=6) or non-pelvic surgery (n=10), childbirth (n=2) or urinary tract infections (n=3). Additional symptoms reported included constipation (n=9), abdominal (n=6) or pelvic pain (n=8). Fifteen patients reported apparently unrelated musculo-skeletal pains requiring analgesics. Following investigations, probable aetiology was identified in 25 (41%) patients as shown in Figure 1. In the remaining patients, no cause for retention could be established. A striking observation apparent from their history but which we have recently been aware of the importance, was that 26 patients (43%) were regularly using opiates and in 11 (42%) of them, no other cause for retention could be identified.

Figure1. Causes for Urinary Retention (n=61)



Interpretation of results

The effect of opiates in producing constipation is well known but "voiding difficulties" or "retention" are also listed as possible adverse effects. Opiates are thought to block the μ receptors in the periaqueductal grey, the primary brain relay centre for bladder afferent activity (2). A chronological relationship between starting opiate medication was not infrequently elicited in a woman's history and two patients who discontinued opiates had a restoration of bladder sensation and voiding ability.

Concluding message

The cause for urinary retention in women may not be identified even after extensive investigations. Young women consuming opiates for undiagnosed pain present a challenging clinical problem and the results of this prospective study suggest that iatrogenic causes should be considered if voiding difficulties start to emerge.

References

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2. Matsumoto S, Levendusky MC, Longhurst PA, Levin RM, Millington WR. Activation of mu opioid receptors in the ventrolateral periaqueductal grey inhibits reflex micturition in anesthetized rats. *Neurosci Lett* 2004;363:116-9

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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	Clinical Audit
Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?	Yes
Was informed consent obtained from the patients?	No