

URINARY INCONTINENCE IN FRENCH WOMEN: PREVALENCE, RISK FACTORS AND IMPACT ON QUALITY OF LIFE

Hypothesis / aims of study

The lack of epidemiological data on the prevalence of female urinary incontinence (UI) attending general practitioners in France led to conduct a cross-sectional study in our country.

Objectives: To determine the prevalence of UI and to assess its impact on the quality of life (QoL)

Study design, materials and methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted of women aged over 18 years attending GPs between June and July 2007.

Measurements: The main outcome measures were urinary symptoms, functional impairment, "International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire Short Form", and medical care seeking.

Results

Overall, 241 GPs enrolled 2183 women seen during one day. The prevalence of UI was 26.8% ($n = 584$) and increased with age, BMI, and number of children delivered ($p < 0.0001$). Among women with UI, 496 were included in a cross-sectional survey: 45.2% ($n = 224$) had stress UI, 42.1% ($n = 209$) had mixed UI, and 10.9% ($n = 53$) had urge UI, while 2% ($n = 10$) were not determined. Overall, 288/496 (51.8%) of women stated that UI had a negative impact on their QoL; this effect remained mostly mild or moderate, and only 197/496 (39.7%) had asked for medical help. Longer duration of symptoms, higher frequency of comorbid urinary symptoms, and altered QoL were most frequent among women with mixed UI ($p < 0.001$). Misclassification may have occurred since the diagnosis of UI was based on self-reported data rather than clinical or urodynamic examinations.

Interpretation of results

UI symptoms were found in almost one in four women attending GPs. Clinical and functional UI impairment were associated with age, BMI, and parity. UI caused distress to women, but only those severely affected sought help. The results emphasise the need for policy development for UI prevention and management in France.

Concluding message

The results emphasise the need for policy development for UI prevention and management in France.

<i>Specify source of funding or grant</i>	None
<i>Is this a clinical trial?</i>	No
<i>What were the subjects in the study?</i>	HUMAN
<i>Was this study approved by an ethics committee?</i>	No
<i>This study did not require ethics committee approval because</i>	epidemiological study done through an official GP network of the INSERM (french public health research institute)
<i>Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?</i>	Yes
<i>Was informed consent obtained from the patients?</i>	No