

Profile of incontinent women and knowledge about urinary incontinence

Perfil de mulheres incontinentes e conhecimento sobre incontinência urinária

Perfil de la mujer incontinente y conocimiento sobre la incontinencia urinaria

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REVISA

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Avaliar o perfil de mulheres incontinentes e o conhecimento acerca da Incontinência Urinária. **Método:** Trata-se de um estudo transversal realizado com mulheres com queixa de perda urinária em uma cidade do interior de Pernambuco, Brasil. Setenta e cinco mulheres incontinentes participaram do estudo, por meio de plataforma online foi aplicado questionário sociodemográfico e instrumento validado para investigar o conhecimento sobre a Incontinência Urinária, o Prolapse and Incontinence Knowledge Quiz (PIKQ). **Resultados:** A maioria das voluntárias era jovem, com média de idade de 43 anos, casadas, com nível educacional e socioeconômico elevados. Todas as voluntárias apresentaram de alto conhecimento sobre a incontinência urinária, com relação à incidência, fatores de risco, diagnóstico e tratamento, havendo lacunas apenas no conhecimento quanto ao uso de fármacos como preditor para o problema. **Conclusão:** Nosso estudo mostrou que a incontinência ocorre em mulheres jovens e o conhecimento foi elevado, podendo ter relação com o nível socioeconômico das voluntárias.

Descritores: Enfermagem; Incontinência Urinária; Conhecimento; Mulher.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate the profile and knowledge of incontinent women regarding urinary incontinence. **Method:** Cross-sectional study performed with women with complaints of urinary loss from a city in the state of Pernambuco, Brazil. Seventy-five incontinent women participated in the study. A sociodemographic and a validated questionnaire regarding the knowledge about urinary incontinence (Prolapse and Incontinence Knowledge Quiz - PIKQ) were answered using an online platform. **Results:** Most participants were young, with a mean age of 43 years, married, and with high educational and socioeconomic levels. All volunteers presented high knowledge regarding the incidence, risk factors, diagnostics and treatment of urinary incontinence, with a gap concerning knowledge regarding the use of drugs as a predictor for the condition. **Conclusion:** The present study showed that urinary incontinence occurs in young women and that knowledge regarding the issue was high, possibly due to the high socioeconomic status of the participants.

Descriptors: Nursing; Urinary Incontinence; Knowledge; Women.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Evaluar el perfil de las mujeres incontinentes y su conocimiento sobre la Incontinencia Urinaria. **Método:** Se trata de un estudio transversal realizado con mujeres que se quejaban de pérdidas urinarias en una ciudad del interior de Pernambuco, Brasil. Setenta y cinco mujeres incontinentes participaron del estudio, a través de una plataforma en línea se aplicó un cuestionario sociodemográfico y un instrumento validado para indagar el conocimiento sobre la incontinencia urinaria, el Prolapse and Incontinence Knowledge Quiz (PIKQ). **Resultados:** La mayoría de los voluntarios eran jóvenes, con una edad media de 43 años, casados, con nivel educativo y socioeconómico alto. Todos los voluntarios tenían un alto nivel de conocimiento sobre la incontinencia urinaria, en cuanto a incidencia, factores de riesgo, diagnóstico y tratamiento, con lagunas sólo en el conocimiento sobre el uso de medicamentos como predictor del problema. **Conclusión:** Nuestro estudio mostró que la incontinencia ocurre en mujeres jóvenes y el conocimiento fue alto, lo que puede estar relacionado con el nivel socioeconómico de las voluntarias.

Descritores: Enfermería; Incontinencia Urinaria; Conocimiento; Mujeres.

ORIGINAL

Introduction

Urinary Incontinence (UI) is the complaint of urinary loss involuntarily and that can occur due to damage to the muscles that support the pelvic organs, interfering with the control of urinary continence.¹ It is considered a public health problem that affects both men and women worldwide, with stress urinary incontinence (SUI) being more prevalent among the types of UI.²⁻⁴

Women of all ages are more affected, with worsening in elderly women, especially in those over 75 years of age.⁵⁻⁶ Currently, UI is considered a Geriatric Syndrome, due to its high incidence in elderly women, however, it is important to emphasize that it is not part of the natural aging process.⁷

One study showed that the presence of UI contributed to a reduction in social interaction and autonomy in daily activities, negatively interfering in personal relationships, especially in the elderly.⁸ In addition, the presence of UI was also related to negative self-perception of health, depressive symptoms and mental problems in elderly people.⁹

In addition to being unaware of incontinence as a disease that needs to be treated, women also have a knowledge deficit related to the risk factors of forms of treatment.¹⁰⁻¹² To better understand this problem, it is essential to investigate women's knowledge about UI to map the needs and interventions to be performed.¹³

Considering the magnitude of the problem that is UI and the lack of knowledge about the theme signaled in the literature, we sought to investigate the knowledge of women who complain of urinary loss about UI.

Method

This is a descriptive cross-sectional field study with a quantitative approach, resulting from a larger study conducted in the city of Petrolina, PE.¹⁴

Prior to the beginning of data collection, all interested women were informed about the stages, as well as the risks and benefits of the study, and, subsequently, for those who agreed to participate in the research, the free and informed consent form (ICF) was made available based on resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council of the Ministry of Health.

The study included women complaining of urinary loss, over 18 years of age, who did not report or presented any psychiatric disorder, cognitive deficit, neurological or disabling diseases, who were not pregnant or with a last delivery for less than one year, who could read, write and understand the Portuguese language, who had WhatsApp and internet access.

Seventy-five women participated in the study and data collection took place remotely, through the Zoom platform, from November 2021 to April 2022. The women answered a sociodemographic questionnaire, developed for the present study, and a questionnaire of knowledge about UI.

The knowledge was investigated by means of a Turkish instrument, translated and validated for the Portuguese by Silva et al¹⁵, in which it is in the process of being published. This instrument, the Brazilian version of the Prolapse and Incontinence Knowledge Quiz (PIKQ), identifies women's knowledge about UI through 12 questions addressing: concept, diagnosis, types of treatment and risk factors.

Data were categorized using SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive statistics based on central tendency (mean), dispersion (standard deviation) and frequency distribution (absolute or relative) were used to characterize the participants.

This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pernambuco (UPE), under protocol number 3.244.043, CAAE: 03682718.4.0000.5207.

Results

The organization and analysis of the data was performed, and the socioeconomic information of the study participants will be shown initially. Of the 75 women studied, brown skin color was prevalent, with 45.3% (n=34), those married or in a stable union, represented 68% of the sample (n=51) and with a mean age of 42.93 years (Table 1).

Regarding income, there was a predominance of incomes above five minimum wages, representing 26.7% (n=20) of the sample, while with regard to schooling, 56% had completed higher education or post-graduation (n=42) (Table 1).

Table 1 - Profile of the participants. Data expressed as mean, standard deviation, absolute and relative frequency. Pernambuco, 2023.

Variable	n(%)
Age (mean, \pm)	42,93 (10,33)
Ethnicity	
Black	14 (18,7)
White	21 (28,0)
Yellow	6 (8,0)
Brown	34 (45,3)
Marital status	
Married/Stable union	51 (68,0)
Single	14 (18,7)
Widow	3 (4,0)
Divorced/Separated	7 (9,3)
Income	
< 1 MW	13 (17,3)
1 to 2 MW	16 (21,3)
2 to 3 MW	15 (20,0)
3 to 4 MW	8 (10,7)
4 to 5 MW	3 (4,0)
> 5 MW	20 (26,7)
Education	
Incomplete elementary school	2 (2,7)
Complete Elementary School	4 (5,3)
Complete Medium	27 (36,0)
Superior Complete	15 (20,0)
Postgraduate studies	27 (36,0)

When evaluating the frequencies of answers to the knowledge questionnaire Prolapse and Incontinence Knowledge Quis, the PIQK, it was observed high knowledge about UI. Most volunteers believe that UI is more common in older people and that women are more likely than men to lose urine.

Questions involving risk factors for UI indicate that women agree that the cause of the problem is multifactorial and that parity is an important risk factor, but there are gaps in knowledge regarding the relationship between drug use and the presence of UI (Table 2).

Regarding the diagnosis, women almost entirely consider it important to diagnose the type of UI before starting treatment and that there are specific tests to identify the presence of UI (Table 2).

Questions that investigated the knowledge about the possibilities of treatment indicate that most understand that the management of urinary symptoms is not restricted to the use of diapers and absorbents, as well as surgery is not the only form of treatment. In addition, most of the women investigated consider that exercises can be performed to improve UI (Table 2). Finally, when asked about the possibility of urinary control after diagnosis of UI, women consider that they may have the condition improved after appropriate treatment, being able to have bladder control again (Table 2).

Table 2- Distribution of the frequencies of answers to the Knowledge Questionnaire - PIQK. Pernambuco, 2023.

Variable	
Q1 - Urinary incontinence (leakage of urine or leaky bladder) is more common in young women than in elderly women.	n (%)
Agree	6 (8,0)
Disagree	59 (78,7)
I don't know	10 (28,0)
Q2 - Women are more likely than men to lose urine.	
Agree	59 (78,7)
Disagree	3(4,0)
I don't know	13 (17,3)
Q3 - Apart from tampons and diapers, little can be done to treat urine loss.	
Agree	10 (13,3)
Disagree	60 (80,0)
I don't know	5 (6,7)
Q4 - It is not important to diagnose the type of urine leakage before trying to treat it.	
Agree	2 (2,7)
Disagree	72 (96,0)
I don't know	1 (1,3)
Q5 - Many things can cause urine leakage.	
Agree	59 (78,7)
Disagree	1 (1,3)
I don't know	15 (20,0)
Q6 - Certain exercises can be done to help control urine leakage.	
Agree	69 (92,0)
Disagree	2 (2,7)
I don't know	4 (5,3)
Q7 - Some medications can cause urinary leakage.	
Agree	24 (32,0)
Disagree	2 (2,7)
I don't know	49 (65,3)
Q8 - Once people start leaking urine, they are never able to control urine again.	
Agree	4 (5,3)
Disagree	67 (89,3)
I don't know	4 (5,3)

Q9 - Doctors may do special types of bladder test to diagnose urine leakage.	
Agree	58 (77,3)
Disagree	1(1,3)
I don't know	16 (21,3)
Q10 - Surgery is the only treatment for urinary loss.	
Agree	4 (5,3)
Disagree	61(81,3)
I don't know	10 (13,3)
Q11 - Many deliveries can lead to leakage of urine.	
Agree	49 (65,3)
Disagree	6 (8,0)
I don't know	20 (26,7)
Q12 - Most people who leak urine can be cured or improved with some type of treatment.	
Agree	73 (97,3)
Disagree	-
I don't know	2 (2,7)

Discussion

This research aimed to evaluate the profile and knowledge of incontinent women about Urinary Incontinence (UI) and revealed high knowledge about the subject in the sample studied.

In the present study, a prevalence of young adult women was observed, with an average age of 43 years, indicating that UI is not a condition only linked to age and reinforcing the need for debate. The literature indicates that the symptoms of urinary loss worsen with aging, with a peak at 50 years, but the report of early urinary loss is already considered worrisome.⁵⁻⁶

In the international scenario, the prevalence of UI is also higher among women, worsening with advancing age, corroborating the Brazilian reality. Despite the prevalence in elderly women, the early onset of urinary symptoms is already a reality, signaling a problem that needs to be discussed.^{5,16}

In the sample studied, most were married or in a stable union and were brown, with high monthly income, with values above five minimum wages. In addition, most participants had a high level of education, a fact that may justify the high knowledge about UI in the PIKQ responses.

A systematic review identified that women's knowledge about pelvic floor muscle (PFM) and UI dysfunctions is very limited, especially with regard to UI. In this study, knowledge was linked to the higher socioeconomic level, a fact already signaled by other authors.¹⁰

Another study that also investigated knowledge about UI with high school students, evaluated 242 girls with an average age of 15.5 years and found that 72% did not know the PFM and 16% lost urine involuntarily. This data shows that there is a need to investigate women's knowledge about UI in various scenarios, due to the opportunity to dialogue on the subject and formulate strategies to face the problem.¹⁷

Women understand UI as a problem that needs diagnosis and treatment, but despite this, the number of incontinent women who seek help, neglecting the problem, is insipient. This fact occurs due to the tendency to normalize UI and the lack of access to therapeutic possibilities.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

It is known by women that performing exercises strengthens the muscles that contribute to urinary continence. Such exercises are strongly recommended by the International Continence Society (ICS) and offer improvement of symptoms present in all types of incontinence, reducing episodes and amount of urinary loss, improving reported symptoms and reflecting positively on quality of life.⁵

Guidance on prevention, risk factors and treatment for UI are important and can be offered in several ways, since there are already recommended protocols, folders and validated booklets that can easily be used by health professionals, especially where there is a deficit in the provision of appropriate treatment for UI.²⁰⁻²¹

In this context, it is noteworthy that its broad area of activity has been gaining ground in the treatment of voiding dysfunctions, being supported by the Federal Nursing Council (COFEN) in its Opinion 04/2016 22, but recognizes the relevance of multiprofessional work, highlighting the importance of other professionals who also work in the area.

The limitations of this study are the realization of the investigation of knowledge in a unique way, not establishing a relationship of cause and effect. Moreover, the relationship between knowledge about UI and treatment was not investigated.

Conclusion

This study showed that UI occurs in young women and also showed that knowledge about UI is high, suggesting that it may be linked to the socioeconomic level of the volunteers.

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