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The extent and severity of urinary incontinence amongst women in UK GP waiting rooms

INTRODUCTION

Few women seek help for urinary incontinence. Subsequently, there may be many women accessing primary care services who would benefit from treatment or advice. If high levels of unexpressed need are present in this population, a more proactive approach to continence management may be appropriate.

A cross-sectional survey of urinary incontinence of adult women attending primary care practices in West Yorkshire, London, Glasgow and Leicestershire during a 10- or 15-day period was conducted to assess the prevalence of urinary incontinence among this population

RESULTS

3273 (54%) women responded. 21% reported stress urinary incontinence only, 3.5% reported urge incontinence only and 21% reported mixed stress and urge incontinence during the preceding month (9% had moderate or severe symptoms). 53% of these had not consulted a health care professional, which is equivalent to 1 in 20 of women in GP waiting rooms, most of whom have stress and urge incontinence (75%) or stress incontinence only (21%).

CONCLUSIONS

- * *Nearly 50% of female primary care attendees had experienced incontinence during the preceding month, but only a minority had sought help.*
- * *Amongst the nearly 1 in 10 woman with moderate or severe incontinence only about 50% had sought help.*
- * *There remains considerable health decrement due to urinary incontinence in those not receiving help in a population readily accessible to primary care services.*
- * *Proactive approach by asking patients about incontinence symptoms and the effect on their lifestyle is appropriate*