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## Quality of life of the elderly women with urinary incontinence: a cross-sectional study

Kamyla Félix Oliveira dos Santos<sup>1</sup>, Maria das Graças Melo Fernandes<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Federal University of Paraíba.

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To evaluate the quality of life of the elderly women with urinary incontinence (UI). **Method:** This cross-sectional study was carried out with 194 incontinent elderly women of the Comprehensive Health Care Center of João Pessoa (*Centro de atenção Integral à Saúde de João Pessoa*), Paraíba. **Result:** By considering the impact of UI in the routine of elderly women, measured from the International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire – Short Form, a mean score of 10.22 was obtained and classified as severe. On the basis of the results obtained through the King's Health Questionnaire, it was observed that the UI showed a negative influence on the lives of the interviewees in the areas—overall health, incontinence impact, severity measures, and emotions. **Conclusion:** The empirical results obtained from this study represent valuable information for the planning of specific interventions in the improvement of the quality of health of these elderly women.

**Keywords:** Urinary incontinence; Aged; Quality of life; Nursing.

## INTRODUCTION

The urinary incontinence (UI) is defined as an involuntary loss of urine, something very common among the elderly population. It should be approached considering a set of factors, such as frequency, severity, social impact, and effects on the hygiene and quality of life<sup>(1)</sup>. It should be noted, however, that these parameters must be measured by reliable and specific UI instruments, among which are the International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire (KHQ) and the International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire – Short Form (ICIQ-SF)<sup>(2)</sup>.

In the context of aging, the diseases for which age itself is a risk factor tend to assume epidemic dimensions such as the UI. Within this condition, the following guiding question was elaborated: What is the evaluation of quality of life of elderly women with UI?

## OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the quality of life of elderly women with UI.

## METHODS

It is a cross-sectional study carried out with elderly women aged 60 years or older, attending to Comprehensive Health Center for Elderly of João Pessoa (*Centro de Atenção Integral à Saúde do Idoso de João Pessoa*), Paraíba. The samples consisted of 194 elderly women who reported having UI. The collection of data was carried out in the period from August to September 2012, using the structured interview technique, with sociodemographic and clinical variables. The ICIQ-SF

and the KHQ were also used in the collecting of valid instruments for measuring the impact of UI on the daily lives of the investigated women. The analysis of the data was carried out on a quantitative approach, by descriptive statistics, verification of the scores, and  $c^2$  association test. The study was submitted and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Health Sciences of the Federal University of Paraíba, Protocol No. 31239/12.

## RESULTS

It was observed that a higher percentage was of young elderly women, with a mean age of 70.62 years, with low education (52.6%), with an income of up to two minimum wages (79.4%), and were widows (39.7%). Most of them (82%) were not looking for help in handling UI. The study showed that the kind of UI of higher prevalence was the urge urinary incontinence (UUI), followed by the effort urinary incontinence (EUI), and, at last, mixed urinary incontinence (MUI).

This research has also revealed that 88.14% of the incontinent elderly women had their quality of life compromised, regardless the amount of interference. Considering the effect of UI in the daily routine of elderly women, measured from the ICIQ-SF, we obtained a mean score of 10.22, classified as severe impact. Besides that, the EUI and the MUI presented a statistically significant relation ( $p < 0.001$ ) with the hindering of the quality of life of incontinent elderly women. On the basis of the results obtained by KHQ, it was observed that the UI showed a negative influence for the interviewees in the following attributions: overall health (55.96), incontinence impact (40.07), severity measures (35.31), and emotions (21.19).

## DISCUSSION

Regarding the characteristics of UI, there is no consensus in literature about the one which affects most the routine. The UI is included among the situation, which adversely affect the daily life owing to the impairment of the sexual, domestic, and occupational life, with physical, psychosocial, and economic damages. The patient becomes susceptible to various problems by the restrictions imposed to their daily activities<sup>(3)</sup>. Thus, it becomes relevant to sensitize nursing professionals into properly approaching this problem. The health services must worry about organizing trained multidisciplinary teams in order to care for women with UI, in the sense of guiding them and offering them conditions for a warm and individualized care.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is concluded that the empirical results obtained in this study represent important information for the planning and implementations of specific nursing interventions. Such interventions have the objective of improving the quality of life and well-being of these women and being the basis for teaching and developing other researches on the practices involving nursing care for elderly women with UI.

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