

Severe Incontinence Correlates With Higher Risk Of Depression

Thursday, 08 September 2005

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - The results of a study published in the September issue of *Obstetrics and Gynecology* suggest that women with moderate-to-severe urinary incontinence are at increased risk of major depression and should be screened for this condition.

Dr. Jennifer L. Melville and colleagues from the University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, examined data for women randomly selected from enrollees at the Group Health Cooperative, a large health maintenance organization in Washington State. Main outcome measures included prevalence of current major depression and adjusted odds ratios (OR) for factors associated with major depression.

A survey questionnaire was mailed to 6000 women, 3536 (64%) of whom responded.

The prevalence of urinary incontinence was 42% (n = 1458). The authors note that the prevalence increased linearly with age, from 28% in women in their 30s to 55% in their 90s.

The overall prevalence of major depression was 3.7%, with 6.1% in women with incontinence and 2.2% in women without this condition.

Among women with urinary incontinence, the prevalence of major depression differed by incontinence severity -- 2.1% in women with mild incontinence, 5.7% in those with moderate incontinence and 8.3% in those with severe incontinence. Depression rates also differed by incontinence type -- 4.7% for stress incontinence and 6.6% for urge/mixed incontinence.

After controlling for age and medical comorbidity, the following factors were also associated with increased risk of major depression in women with urinary incontinence: obesity (OR 2.3), current smoking (OR 2.7) and lower educational attainment (OR 2.0).

Women with comorbid incontinence and major depression had significantly greater decrements in quality of life and functional status compared with those with incontinence alone. These women also experienced increased incontinence symptom burden.

"Incontinence and major depression are highly prevalent in women throughout their lifetimes, yet both conditions are under-diagnosed and under-treated," Dr. Melville told Reuters Health. "By increasing awareness of the two conditions and potential associations between them, we hope to improve the detection and treatment of these distressing conditions, thereby improving the quality of life of millions of women."

[Obstet Gynecol 2005;106:585-592](#)