

Pelvic floor disorders 'suffered in silence'

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Evaluating the prevalence and impact of pelvic floor disorders, along with predisposing factors for the condition.

The majority of women suffer from some form of pelvic floor disorder (PFD), but very few seek help until they are incontinent, a survey conducted in a Philadelphia hospital suggests.

Among the 1111 women, aged 20 years or older, who completed the questionnaire, 800 (72 percent) reported current PFD, but only 229 (30 percent) of these women had ever sought help for the condition, say Brian Steixner, from Temple University School of Medicine in Philadelphia, and colleagues.

Moreover, by the time they seek help, which is usually triggered by incontinence, most have multiple urogynecological problems, they add. "Incontinence is usually the tip of the iceberg. Many are also suffering from such PFDs as uterine or rectal prolapse."

As part of the study, the team also assessed a series of potential predisposing factors for the condition, using multivariate analysis, which suggested that increasing age, number of births, and forceps delivery were the most significant predictors for PFD.

Just over half (51.4 percent) of the participants with PFD reported involvement of a single system, either the genitourinary (GU), gastrointestinal (GI), or gynecologic (GYN) system, and the number of affected systems was found to correlate with discomfort and quality of life.

"With a major overlap in GU, GI, and GYN system dysfunction significantly impacting physical discomfort and quality of life, comprehensive medical assessment should be part of the routine physical exam for all women," concludes the team.