

“A systemic review of urinary incontinence among women in GCC countries: prevalence and risk factors”

1-Dr Nahed Jamal Arnous ,2-Dr Waad Fadi Arnous

1-Consultant Family Physician Al-Sadd Health center ,Doha,Qatar

2- Graduated with honours from Al-Faisal University,Riyadh ,KSA

Abstract

Urinary incontinence (UI) in women is a major common health problem that has an enormous impact on their lifestyle and quality of life. Urinary incontinence, also known as accidental bladder leakage, is an embarrassing problem that affects millions of women. Although it is more common in older women, it can affect younger women as well. It is not related to aging all the time; there are other associated risk factors. UI is well known and studied in Western countries, and there are different approaches to managing this medical condition with different outcomes. Our objective is to do a systemic review to go deep into finding out the prevalence of this condition in the GCC countries. In this paper, we reviewed the published literature about urinary incontinence among women in GCC countries along with the associated risk factors.

Introduction

Urinary incontinence remains an overlooked clinical condition all over the world. Broadly speaking, urinary incontinence is any involuntary leakage of urine. UI affects both genders but is more common among women. There are several types of UI. Among which are stress incontinence, urge incontinence, and mixed incontinence. Stress incontinence is leaking urine upon physical exertion, sneezing, or coughing. Urge incontinence is incontinence following an intense urge of urination that cannot be deferred. Mixed incontinence is when both stress and urge incontinence coexist. Risk factors that have been shown to attribute to the prevalence of UI among women include age, multiparity, multiple vaginal deliveries, menopause, obesity, and comorbid conditions like diabetes, hypertension, asthma, chronic cough, and genitourinary infections. Urinary incontinence is often underreported by women either due to the false belief that it is a normal aging process or an incurable condition or simply because they are ashamed to disclose this complaint. Though not fatal, UI has been shown to significantly and negatively impact different aspects of a patient's life.

Methodology

This systemic review study aims to review published literature about urinary incontinence among women in GCC countries. The keywords used are urinary incontinence, Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, prevalence, risk factors, and women. Articles that addressed UI among specific patient populations, such as diabetics, pregnant, or multiparous, were excluded as they do not reflect the whole population. The search was done on PubMed and Google Scholar. We reviewed 11 cross-sectional studies that were published in GCC, published in English, and available as free full texts. (Saudi Arabia (n=4) [1]–[5], UAE (n=1) [6], Kuwait (n=1) [7], Oman (n=2)

[8], [9], Qatar (n=1) [10] Bahrain (n=1) [11]The limitation of this study was the paucity of cross-sectional studies carried out in the GCC countries and the fact that most were published way back.

Results

Many cross-sectional studies have attempted to reveal the prevalence of urinary incontinence among women in the Gulf countries, the associated risk factors, and healthcare-seeking patterns. The highest prevalence was reported in Kuwait. The overall prevalence in KSA ranged from 20.8% to 47.5%. [2][3] [4] [5]The prevalence in UAE was 42.2% [6]The prevalence in Oman ranged between 34.5% to 44%. [8], [9]In Qatar, 21% of women had UI. [10]The prevalence in Kuwait was 54.5%. [7] No data was found about the prevalence of UI in Bahrain. The study from Bahrain focused on risk factors only. Most of the studies had stress incontinence as the most prevalent.

Age, BMI, parity, menopause, and comorbidities like diabetes and bronchial asthma are among the risk factors that have been shown to highly contribute. [5]

Discussion

Moreover, urinary incontinence is a sensitive condition that negatively impacts women's quality of life both physically and emotionally. Affected women tend to isolate socially due to the fear of becoming incontinent in public, provided that some types of urinary incontinence can be very unpredictable. Surprisingly, many of these women refrain from disclosing this problem to their primary care physician either because they believe it is a normal aging process or an incurable condition that they must cope with for life or because they are too shy to seek medical attention. This fact makes it of concern to shed light on this medical condition.

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Campaigns should be carried out to Raise awareness and educate patients about the availability of therapy and the importance of seeking medical advice without delay.

Primary care physicians should screen for UI on routine healthcare visits as most women are embarrassed to disclose this complaint.

Conclusion

Urinary incontinence is widely prevalent among women in GCC. It has a significant impact on their life on a personal, social, occupational, and religious level. However, Women refrain from asking for medical advice.

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