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Urinary incontinence in women in rural Pakistan: Prevalence, severity, associated factors and impact on life

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Objective: To estimate the prevalence of urinary incontinence (UI) and its subtypes in women in rural Pakistan associated factors, severity and impact on daily life.

Study design: Population-based, cross-sectional study.

Setting: A rural community in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

Population: Randomly selected women aged 15 years or older.

Methods: A three-level random sampling strategy was used to select women: a random sample of health centres; a random sample of Lady Health Workers (LHWs) from each health centre; and a random sample of women in the LHWs catchment areas. The LHWs used an interview-based structured questionnaire to collect data from women.

Main outcome measure: Urinary incontinence reported by women.

Results: Among the 5064 participants (response rate 95.8%) the prevalence of any UI was 11.5% (581/5064; 95% CI 10.6–12.3). The most common subtype was stress incontinence, with a prevalence of 4.7% (95% CI 4.1–5.3), followed by urge incontinence, with a prevalence of 3.2% (95% CI 2.7–3.7), mixed incontinence, with a prevalence of 2.8% (95% CI 2.3–3.2), other incontinence, with a prevalence of 0.4% (95% CI 0.2–0.5) and continuous incontinence, with a prevalence of 0.5% (95% CI 0.3–0.6). Older age, higher parity and marriage at an early age were independently associated with UI. We found that 52% of women with UI reported leakage at least daily, and 45% reported a great or moderate impact on their daily life. Only 15.7% of women with UI had consulted a doctor.

Conclusions: The prevalence of UI reported in rural Pakistan was lower than is generally found in studies from the developed world, but among the women affected it commonly occurred on a daily basis and impacted on their everyday lives, yet few had obtained medical advice.

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