The impact of urodynamic stress incontinence and detrusor overactivity on marital relationship and sexual function

Shing-Kai Yip, MD, Alice Chan, MBBS, Selina Pang, MBChB, Peter Leung, MSc, Catherine Tang, PhD, Daniel Shek, PhD, and Tony Chung, MD
Shatin, Hong Kong

OBJECTIVE: We assessed and compared the quality of life, marital relationship, and sexual function of women who had urodynamic stress incontinence (USI) or detrusor overactivity (DO) diagnosed.

STUDY DESIGN: Women with the following urodynamic diagnoses, normal, USI, or DO, were compared by using the psychometric questionnaires: King's Health Questionnaire (KHQ, for quality of life), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, for marital relationship), and Derogatis Sexual Functioning Inventory (DSFI, for sexual function).

RESULTS: Women with DO (n = 29) were younger than healthy women (n = 28) and women with USI (n = 36) (P < .05). Women with USI or DO had a poorer quality of life (P < .05), poorer marital relationship (P < .05), and less sexual satisfaction (P < .05), despite having no change in sexual drive (P > .05). Regression analyses showed that only sexual satisfaction and incontinence-related emotions were associated with marital relationship (P < .05).

CONCLUSION: Marital relationship and sexual function were negatively affected in women who had USI or DO. (Am J Obstet Gynecol 2003;188:1244-8.)

Key words: Marital relationship, sexual function, urodynamic stress incontinence, detrusor overactivity

Urinary incontinence is a common condition. It is distressing and has been shown to affect a woman's quality of life. On the other hand, it has been reported in recent literature that incontinent women also had problems with sex. Temml et al reported 25.1% of incontinent women had some form of impairment in sexual function, and the majority of affected women believed that stress incontinence and urge incontinence during coitus were the most bothersome. Gordon et al reported up to 29% of women had urinary incontinence during sexual activity, and it appeared that younger women experienced this more often than elderly women. It has also been shown that women with detrusor overactivity (DO) had greater sexual dysfunction than women with urodynamic stress incontinence (USI).

Marital relationship is a complementary function of sexual activity, and sexual dysfunction is associated with deterioration in marital relationship, especially when there are difficult intrapersonal or interpersonal stresses. Because incontinent women have been shown to have sexual dysfunction, it is likely that they may also have a poor marital relationship.

Deterioration of marital relationship among incontinent women has not been reported in the literature, but theoretically it would be affected in women with USI or DO. Furthermore, the relationship among these women's quality of life, marital relationship, and sexual function is unknown. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate whether women who have USI or DO have a poor marital relationship compared with healthy control subjects.

Material and methods
A prospective observational study was performed to compare the quality of life, marital relationship, and sexual function among three groups of women who had...