

Hysterectomy does not impair incontinence - A Swedish quality register study

Anders Kjaeldgaard
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Huddinge
Karolinska University Hospital, Stockholm, Sweden

AIM

Recent epidemiological studies seem to favour the view that hysterectomy is followed by higher incidence of urinary incontinence. What can data from a national quality register tell about this classical question?

MATERIAL & METHODS

Data from 2006-2008 in the Swedish Quality Register of Gynecological Surgery including 70% of all hysterectomies in Sweden were used (14.505 cases). The patients were asked to estimate urinary leakage according to a 5-graded scale (never, almost never, once a month, once a week and daily) in a questionnaire before and one year after hysterectomy. Hysterectomies with benign pathology were selected for the study and analyzed in SPSS 16.5. Chi2 test was used for statistical evaluation.

Incontinence in hysterectomized patients with benign histology

Selection criteria	cases n	Incontinence		Significance p-value
		preop %	postop%	
All cases included	9005	29.5	23.6	<0.001
Concomitant adnexal surgery	3616	27.6	23.4	<0.001
Concomitant prolapse	707	39.0	25.4	<0.001
Very enlarged (>12 p.w)	454	33.0	23.4	<0.001

Continence in patients with bleeding disorders and uterus ≤ 6 p.w.

preop		Postop (12 months)		
		Continent	Incontinent	total
Continent	n	485	51	536
	%	90,5%	9,5%	76,6%
Incontinent	n	53	111	164
	%	32,3%	67,7%	23,4%
Total	n	538	162	700
	%	76,9%	23,1%	100%

RESULTS

- Nearly one out of three patients undergoing hysterectomy suffers from incontinence
- In general, hysterectomy is associated with a slight (5%) reduction of incontinence since patients with prolapse and very enlarged uterus benefit from surgery
- However the net effect of hysterectomy per se on urinary incontinence is neutral

One out of ten patients reports de novo incontinence one year after hysterectomy

One out of three, however, reports de novo continence

Preoperative incontinence versus size of uterus

Preoperative statement		Uteri size				Total
		<7v	7-10v	10-13v	>13v	
Continent	%	72,3%	72,4%	72,8%	67,0%	71,5%
Incontinent	%	27,7%	27,6%	27,2%	33,0%	28,5%
Total	n	1648	586	276	454	2964

CONCLUSION

Hysterectomy per se has a neutral influence on urinary incontinence in the short term. About 10% of continent patients will report postoperative incontinence, but a good 30% of incontinent patients are postoperatively continent. Follow-up studies on the selected low-risk group for manifesting incontinence later on may eventually answer the still open question if hysterectomy per se predisposes for incontinence in the long term.