

SYSTEMATIC TRIAL OF PAD INFORMATION UTILITY (STOPIT): WOMEN'S SOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF CONTINENCE PRODUCTS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY.

Hypothesis / aims of study

Despite the many treatment options available and guidelines suggesting containment products as a last resort, up to 77% of women manage incontinence with containment products on a daily basis [1]. It may be that they accept incontinence as a normal part of ageing, or see it only as a minor problem and therefore they do not seek professional help. Previous research suggests consumers' desire more information on the cost, design, quality and comfort of different products [2], but may not know where to find this information. To date there has been little published work examining user's knowledge of continence products and from where they obtain their information. The objectives of this study were to determine from what sources women sought and received information about continence products and to evaluate their perception of the utility of this information.

Study design, materials and methods

This was a descriptive mixed methods study with quantitative and qualitative phases. For the quantitative phase an online survey was created and advertised to target community dwelling women who use some sort of containment products to manage their urinary incontinence. The survey was advertised at the host university, local health organizations, incontinence, urogynaecology and other health clinics, medical supply stores and local newspaper. To maximize recruitment from beyond the local community, non-for-profit health websites and social media were also used to advertise the survey. At the local urogynaecology and continence clinic a researcher conducted oral surveys with patients who were not comfortable doing an online survey. Data was collected on SurveyMonkey. Descriptive statistics, including means and frequency distributions, were completed using Microsoft Excel 2010[®]. Even though the survey was targeted towards women, a question specifying gender was included after the survey went live to ensure respondents met the inclusion criteria.

Using results of the initial local quantitative phase, a draft semi-structured interview guide was refined with the intention of gaining further insight into survey results. Local survey participants were invited to participate by calling a telephone number provided at the end of the survey or at clinic survey completion. Written consent was obtained from all interview participants. Interviews focused on participant use, knowledge of and information sources about containment products and participant's opinions about the utility of the information they received. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. All identifying data were removed at the transcription stage. Using a constant comparative approach, the two researchers developed a coding framework from the first transcript to which new codes were added. The codes were then collapsed into categories and finally themes.

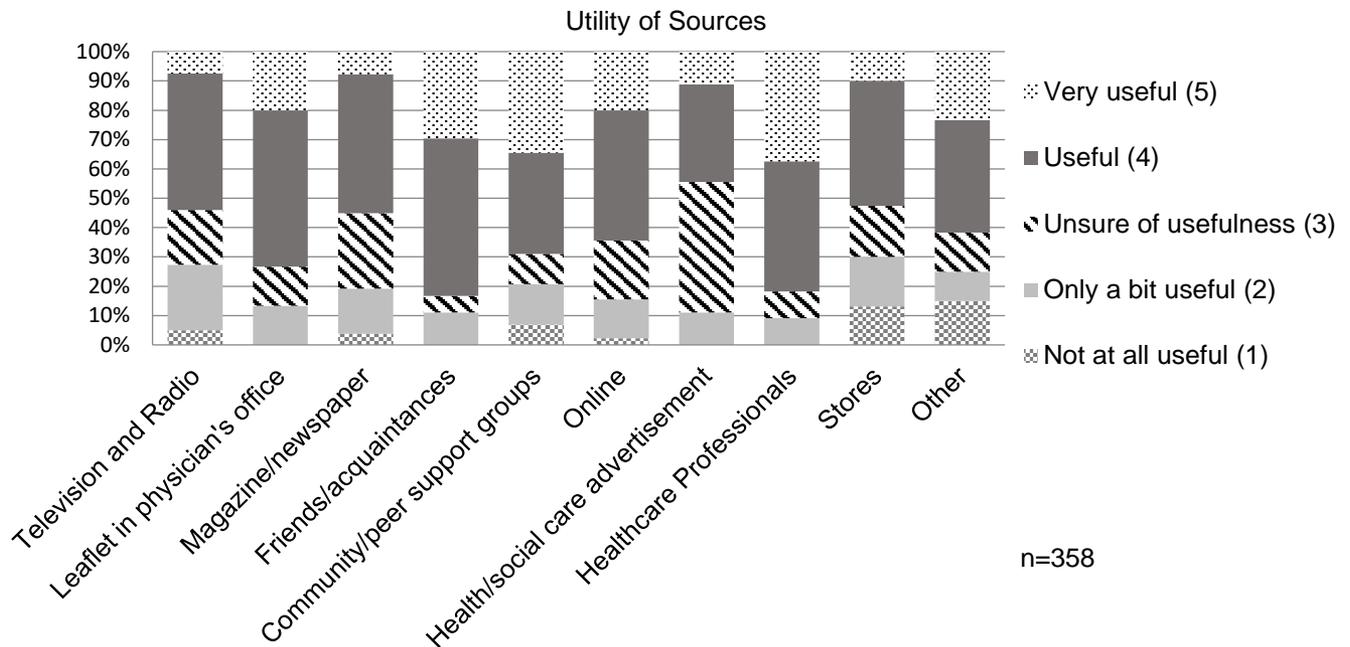
Results

396 participants met the inclusion criteria for the quantitative phase; 62% were between the ages of 41-70 with a median age range of 51-60 years old. 247 (75%) were from Canada, 45 (14%) from the USA, 17 (5%) from the UK, 13 (4%) from New Zealand, and 6 (2%) from other countries (n=328). 59% reported leaking urine once or less per week and only 9% had leaked several times a day. Most women leaked drops or a tablespoon of urine each time (34% and 40%, respectively), while 26% of women leak significant amounts each time (half or a full cup or more). 66% of women used bladder products for their incontinence, 24% used feminine hygiene products and 9% used both (n=390). Of the women who used bladder products, only 2 out of 288 (0.69%) used reusable/washable products. Data concerning preferences of different bladder products (n=285) revealed women with light and medium incontinence preferred small disposable pads during the day and night. Those with heavy incontinence preferred large disposable pads during the day and night. Those with severe heavy incontinence preferred large disposable pads during the day and all-in ones at night.

The most common sources of information (n=364) were stores (45%) and television/radio (43%), followed by health care professionals (24%), online information (23%) and magazines or newspapers (22%). For utility of sources (n=358) the greatest percentage of "useful" or "very useful" responses were for friends/acquaintances (83%) and healthcare professionals (82%). Leaflets available in primary care offices and health or social care advertisements were identified as infrequent sources, but rated as useful. (Figure 1). When asked who participants would they like to receive information about continence products from (n=249) 53% identified health care professionals as best placed to give information about continence products.

9 women completed interviews (mean age 70 years). Five themes were identified: existing knowledge, seeking knowledge, reasons for choosing, how incontinence affects life, and perceptions of health care professionals' roles. When seeking information they were looking for an informative and trustworthy source. This is why women turned to healthcare professionals, but the helpfulness of their experiences with healthcare professionals varied. Product choice was made through a trial and error approach as they drew information from a variety of sources included product labels. Cost was an influential factor in product selection. Women wanted a product that allowed them to feel safe and secure.

Figure 1: Utility of Sources



Interpretation of results

There was a contrast between how participants received information about continence products and what they believed to be the most useful sources of information. Popular sources such as pharmacies/other stores and television and radio were accessible, but they lacked the ability to give specific information based on the individual needs. Friends/acquaintances and healthcare professionals were highly ranked, but experiences with these sources varied because of the varying knowledge and willingness to discuss incontinence. Women are not receiving information about continence products in a manner that suits their needs reinforcing a trial and error approach to product selection.

Concluding message

Women seek information on continence products from a variety of sources. Health care professionals are a desirable source, but may not have the knowledge to provide when approached. Health care professionals need to incorporate assessment of incontinence in patient encounters, and provide information on options, including products. Providing samples of products may aid women in finding the proper fitting product.

References

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Disclosures

Funding: First Quality summer studentship **Clinical Trial:** No **Subjects:** HUMAN **Ethics Committee:** University of Alberta Research Ethics Board **Helsinki:** Yes **Informed Consent:** Yes