

## **Sex differences in help-seeking behavior in urinary incontinence in the elderly**

**Toine Lagro-Janssen**<sup>1</sup> Doreth Teunissen<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre, Nijmegen, Netherlands

The aim of this study was to assess sex differences in disorder-and patient-specific factors that influence help-seeking behavior by independently living elderly people with urinary incontinence. The study population consisted of participants in a study on the prevalence of incontinence among elderly people. Independently living elderly people aged 60 or over from nine family practices with uncomplicated urinary incontinence were interviewed at home using a disorder-specific questionnaire and open-ended questions. In total, 56 men and 314 women were interviewed. Results show that men sought help from their GP when they had less severe incontinence than women. Help-seeking behavior in women was related to the duration of symptoms (odds ratio 3.66, 95% CI 1.44-9.39), the presence of incontinence-related symptoms such as constant feeling of vaginal pressure and pain in the lower abdomen (odds ratio 2.69, 95% CI 1.52-4.76) and the severity of incontinence (odds ratio 1.69, 95% CI 0.99-2.88). In men help-seeking was related to the distress experienced in daily life (odds ratio 7.10, 95% CI 1.15-43.91). Help-seeking in women is determined by the duration of the symptoms, the presence of concomitant complaints and the severity of incontinence. In men help-seeking behavior is mostly related to the distress experienced in daily life. Most men and women who did not seek help consider their incontinence as not being serious enough, or they had inappropriate beliefs such as that “incontinence is age-related” and “there is nothing that can be done about incontinence”.