

Incontinence and pelvic floor muscle training after gynecologic cancer treatment



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Background

Incontinence is a common side-effect after gynecologic cancer. In order to offer cancer rehabilitation based on relevant needs greater knowledge regarding individual experiences is needed.

Aim

To describe how women treated for gynecological cancer experience incontinence in relation to quality of life and their possibilities for physical activity and physical training. Describe perceptions and experiences of pelvic floor muscle training.

Results

Two themes emerged;

Living with incontinence and *physical activity and exercise*, with five categories.

Table 2. Themes, categories and subcategories, with citations

Conclusion

The gynecological cancer survivors experienced that:

- Incontinence reduced their quality of life
- Lack of information limited their way of handling the situation
- Incontinence limited their possibilities for physical activity
- They had little experience of pelvic floor muscle training
- Coping-strategies facilitated living with incontinence

These findings implicate that:

- Information routines about incontinence after gynecologic cancer should be implemented
- Pelvic floor muscle training may be evaluated and implemented within cancer rehabilitation

Method

A qualitative descriptive interview study. Fourteen women who had undergone treatment for gynecological cancer and suffered from urine- or fecal incontinence were included. The interviews were analyzed using latent content analysis.

Table 1. Background data of the gynecological cancer survivors

Age median (range) years	66 (48 – 82)
Time since cancer treatment median (range) years	4 (1 – 21)
Undergone radiotherapy n(%)	2 (15,5)
Undergone surgery n(%)	5 (38,5)
Undergone radiotherapy and surgery n(%)	6 (46)

Numbers (n) and proportion (%) is presented



THEME: LIVING WITH INCONTINECE		THEME: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE	
Category	Subcategory	Category	Subcategory
Emotional reactions, thoughts and musings that incontinence contribute to	-Worry and fear of leakage -Feelings of exclusion and not fitting in -Feelings of lack of freedom in everyday life -Gratitude to be alive and not to be the worst affected by incontinence	Possibilities and limitations to be physically active and consequences of not being able to be physically active in the same way as before because of incontinence	-Opportunities to be physically active -Consequences of physical inactivity
Adaption and strategies to maintain a good quality of life	-Practical adaptation to avoid leakage or that leakage is noted by the environment -Acceptance of their situation in life -Tell others about incontinence -Own responsibility to maintain a good quality of life	Experiences of, beliefs about and desires about pelvic floor muscle training after gynecological cancer treatment	-Experiences of pelvic floor muscle training -Beliefs about pelvic floor muscle training -Desires about pelvic floor muscle training
Lack of information about incontinence and pelvic floor muscle training in association to gynecological cancer treatment	"I did not get much information at all ... nothing about incontinence, nothing."	"I am fully convinced that I can influence the pelvic floor muscles, although they are a bit damaged."	