Understanding Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms (LUTS) and Their Impact on Life-Space in Older Adults

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Background

- By age 56, roughly 7 out of 10 men and women report at least one lower urinary tract symptom (LUTS). Patients affected by LUTS experience a marked impact on their health related quality of life.
- Life-space refers to the size of the spatial area throughout which a person moves in their daily life and is a major factor in determining one’s overall health.
- Although both of these topics have undergone extensive examination, the direct impact of LUTS on life-space has yet to gain thorough analysis.
- The aim of this study was to understand patients’ beliefs and behaviors regarding their lower urinary tract symptoms and how this may affect their life-space.

Methods

- Participants were community-dwelling older adults from a continuing care retirement community in Tallahassee, FL within independent living and assisted living facilities.
- 40 subjects completed a 30-item questionnaire consisting of an International Prostate Symptom Score (IPSS) to assess their urinary symptoms and questions to examine how far they travel from home during their daily lives.
- Participants were interviewed if they (1) stated they were willing to be interviewed on the survey form and (2) demonstrated an elevated IPSS score greater than 7 out of a possible 35 or a decreased life-space measured by leaving their community less than 4 times per week.
- Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 24 subjects using a semi-structured format. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed.

Results

- Participant Demographics
- Quality of life due to urinary symptoms (n=40)
- How do urinary tract symptoms affect patients’ lives?
- Space in Older Adults

Discussion/Lessons Learned

- Increased urinary symptoms may not correlate with decreased life-space due to coping strategies.
- Subjects cope with urinary symptoms by putting symptoms in perspective relative to diseases or conditions that affect family and friends.
- The often progressive nature of these symptoms leads to behavior modification over time so subjects can continue to maintain active lifestyles.

Strategies for discussing sensitive issues that may lead to more discovery of disease impact on patient

- Acknowledge discomfort/awkwardness up front.
- Ask patient to “share with me a story about a time when...”

Limitations/Next Steps

- Subjects enrolled in the study all live in the same adult living community and share many characteristics including race, financial status, and access to healthcare.
- The often progressive nature of these symptoms leads to behavior modification over time so subjects can continue to maintain active lifestyles.
- How much more do the strategies of acknowledging discomfort in speaking about sensitive issues and asking patients to personalize their condition by telling a story reveal about the impact of diseases on patients?