

Factors Associated With Seeking Treatment for Urinary Incontinence During the Menopausal Transition

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OBJECTIVE: To examine whether longitudinal urinary incontinence (UI) characteristics, race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and education were associated with UI treatment-seeking in a prospective cohort of community-dwelling midlife women.

METHODS: We analyzed data from 9 years of the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation. The study asked participants reporting at least monthly UI about seeking treatment for their UI at baseline and in visit years 7, 8, and 9. Our main covariates included self-reported race or ethnicity, income, level of difficulty paying for basics, and education level. We used multiple logistic regression to examine associations between demographic, psychosocial, and longitudinal UI characteristics and whether women sought UI treatment. We explored interactions by race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status measures, and education level.

RESULTS: A total of 1,550 women (68% of women with UI) reported seeking treatment for UI over the 9 years of this study. In multivariable analyses, women had higher odds of seeking treatment when UI in the year before seeking treatment was more frequent (adjusted odds ratio [OR] 3.16, 95% confidence interval [CI] 1.15–8.67) and more bothersome (adjusted OR 1.09, 95% CI 1.01–1.18), with longer symptom duration, and with worsening UI symptoms (adjusted OR 1.75, 95% CI 1.01–3.04). Women who saw physicians regularly, had more preventive women's health visits, or both were more likely to seek UI treatment (adjusted OR 1.18, 95% CI 1.07, 1.30). Race or ethnicity, socioeconomic measures, and education were not significantly related to seeking treatment for UI.

CONCLUSION: We found no evidence of racial or ethnic, socioeconomic, or education level disparities in UI treatment-seeking. Rather, longitudinal UI characteristics were most strongly associated with treatment-seeking behavior in midlife women.

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: II