Commentary on: “Patients’ perspective on urethral bulk injection therapy and mid-urethral sling surgery for stress urinary incontinence”

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This was a qualitative study where the researchers conducted 20 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in women with primary stress urinary incontinence (SUI). The aim of the study was to identify all treatment decision factors that determined the preference for peri-urethral bulk injection (PBI) therapy or mid-urethral sling (MUS) surgery in patients with primary SUI. Patients were recruited from a tertiary urogynaecological centre in The Netherlands. To be eligible, women had to be speak Dutch and to seek treatment for SUI. Exclusion criteria included women who had previous PBI or MUS surgery or those with predominant urgency incontinence (UUI). The interview was guided by three open-ended questions and a topic list. Open-ended questions were: “What do you expect from a treatment for SUI?”, “Which factors would you take into account if you could choose between PBI and MUS surgery?” and “Would you consider PBI a primary treatment option?” Predetermined topics were anaesthesia, efficacy, complications, safety, setting, recovery and post-operative pain, re-interventions and sexual function.

Sixteen treatment decision factors, categorised in five domains, determined patients’ preference between PBI and

MUS surgery. The five domains were procedural, personal, professional, social and external. Regarding expectation towards treatment for SUI, women believed “becoming dry” would be “wishful thinking”. The authors highlight that most patients accepted a small degree of persistent incontinence following treatment and emphasise that women with primary SUI seeking treatment should be informed about PBI as a treatment option.

A strength of this study is the quantitative design ensuring a broad spectrum of patient perspectives. The use of open-ended questions allows respondents to include more information and reveal their logic and thinking processes. However, with open-ended questions, different people give different degrees of detail in their answers, and researchers may notice that they may receive unnecessary comments. The small sample size may lead to a lack of statistical power. Furthermore, the women included had a wide range of characteristics; therefore, one wonders how representative this could be.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflicts of interest None.

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