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THE EFFECT OF INSTRUCTING PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLE TRAINING FOR CONTROLLING URINARY INCONTINENCE AND ITS RESULTING STRESS, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IN PATIENTS WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

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Background and aims: Urinary disorders are common problems in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS). Urinary incontinence largely affects the physical, social, and emotional characteristics and activities of these patients. The aim of this study was to identify the effect of pelvic floor muscle Training on urinary incontinence and its resulting stress, anxiety and depression in MS patients.

Methods: The present clinical trial with a pre-post design was conducted on 50 MS patients presenting to the MS clinic of Imam Khomeini Hospital in Tehran (Iran) who had been selected by convenience sampling method. Participants received instructions on pelvic floor muscle exercises and then practiced them for three consecutive months. The International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire – Urinary Incontinence Short Form (ICIQ-UI SF) was used to measure participants' urinary incontinence and the 21-item Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) then used to measure their depression, anxiety and stress, both before the intervention and at the end of the third month of exercising. The data obtained were analyzed in SPSS16 using descriptive statistics and the dependent *t* test.

Results: About 45 (90%) participants practiced pelvic floor muscle exercises up until the end of the third month. The frequency and amount of urine leakage and the effect of urinary incontinence on the quality of life differed significantly in the patients after the instructions compared to before ($P < 0.001$). The mean score of stress ($P < 0.001$), anxiety ($P = 0.04$) and depression ($P = 0.003$) decreased significantly after the intervention.

Conclusion: According to the findings, instructing pelvic floor muscle exercises is effective in reducing urinary incontinence and its resulting stress, anxiety and depression in MS patients. These exercises are therefore recommended as a non-pharmacological, non-invasive and cost-effective method for controlling urinary incontinence in MS patients.