

Lower Urogenital Tract Pain Syndromes

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Female chronic pain of urogenital origin is common in all age groups. Embarrassment, guilt feelings, lack of awareness by both patients and professionals leads to underestimation of the true prevalence of this condition.

The lower uro-genital anatomy involves the urinary, genital and gastrointestinal tracts. Innervations are complex and consist of somatic, sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. Chronic Pelvic Pain Syndromes include: Bladder pain syndrome-Interstitial cystitis, Urethral syndrome, Endometriosis associated pain syndrome, Vaginal pain syndrome, Vulvar pain syndrome (generalised and localized) and Anorectal pain syndromes. Also classified are Neurological pain syndromes: Pudendal neuralgia/Pudendal nerve entrapment syndromes and Muscular pain syndromes: Perineal pain and Pelvic floor muscle pain syndromes.

The etiology of chronic urogenital pain without clear inflammatory or obstructive pathology is still unclear. A specific treatable cause can be identified in a minority of patients, but most often the examination and workup turn-up negative. Subsequently, the existence of chronic urogenital pain syndromes may be questioned or the symptoms are attributed to purely psychological origins. A large body of literature suggesting organic causes, however, counterbalances this.

Unfortunately, patients with acute or chronic urogenital pain seek help from a variety of health care providers because their symptoms do not clearly fit into one medical subspecialty. Urologists, gynecologists, neurologists, psychologists, Physiotherapists, anesthesiologists or pain management specialists may treat them. The accumulated knowledge is not shared, and patients are often referred from one clinic to another. In the lecture, lower urogenital tract anatomy and innervations will be presented, Chronic urogenital pain syndromes will be discussed focusing on generalized and focal vulvar pain syndromes and bladder pain syndrome (interstitial cystitis). Childbirth trauma associated pain will be described and discussed. The concept of perineal clinics will be presented suggesting multi-disciplinary approach to the management of these patients.