Persistent long-term urinary incontinence post parturition

There is a high incidence of long-term postpartum urinary incontinence associated with spontaneous vaginal delivery; with maternal factors such as excessive weight and increased age as additional risk factors.

Delivery exclusively by caesarean section confers an advantage against developing postpartum urinary incontinence in the early, intermediate and long term.

Therapeutic interventions should be studied to ascertain efficacy in reducing the incidence and severity of such incontinence.
This study provides valuable results in early and long term postpartum urinary incontinence. The incidence rates are high and the extent of incontinence sufficiently severe to impact negatively on the quality of life of the participants. These high rates and impacts persist in the long term and the authors also highlight the development of de novo incontinence in the follow-up period.

The authors comment that the response rates are low at longer term follow-up, yet half of the initial subjects remained within the study at twelve years, indicating a relatively low attrition rate compared with previous studies in the literature 2.

The study highlights the protective effect of caesarean section against developing urinary incontinence, but only if this has been the exclusive mode of delivery. The study also confirms the already known effects of obesity and advancing maternal age as negative influences on continence rates following childbirth.

A surprising finding was that despite high incontinence rates, significant symptom severity and negative impact on quality of life, the majority of women had not received therapeutic intervention for their incontinence. Whether this reflected patient avoidance of seeking treatment or prevention; or an absence of such being offered remains unclear and may warrant further study.

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Competing Interests:
None.