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[Am J Obstet Gynecol](#). 2001 Jun;184(7):1496-501; discussion 1501-3. doi: 10.1067/mob.2001.114868.

The demographics of pelvic floor disorders: current observations and future projections

[K M Luber](#) ¹, [S Boero](#), [J Y Choe](#)

Affiliations

PMID: 11408873 DOI: [10.1067/mob.2001.114868](#)

Abstract

Objective: Our aim was to assess current demand for care of pelvic floor disorders and create projections for future demand for care. We also sought to better understand the characteristics of women seeking care.

Study design: Current demand for care was calculated by comparing those women seeking care through the female pelvic floor disorders clinic with those women of the same age range at risk within an integrated health care delivery program. Patients underwent complete urogynecologic evaluation including cystometry. Women seeking care were compared with regard to age, distribution of conditions (pelvic organ prolapse, stress conditions, urge conditions), and probability of undergoing surgery. Modeling the study population by use of data from the US Census Bureau, which projects population changes over the next 30 years, created predictions of future demand.

Results: Data were available on 2070 consecutive patients with an age range of 30 to 89 years normally distributed around a median age of 61.5 years drawn from an at-risk population of 149,000 women aged 30 to 89 years. Older women generated more consults per 1000 woman years than did the younger cohorts (1.7 vs 18.6 consults per 1000 woman years for those 30-39 years old vs those 70-79 years old; $P < .05$). Estimates of growth in demand at 30 years indicate a 45% increase in demand while net growth of the same population segment should be 22%. Stress conditions were more common among younger women and urge conditions were more common among older women. Pelvic organ prolapse was equally distributed throughout the age ranges.

Conclusions: Over the next 30 years, growth in demand for services to care for female pelvic floor disorders will increase at twice the rate of growth of the same population. Demand for care for pelvic floor disorders comes from a wide age range of women, although mature age groups generate 10 times the number of consults per 1000 woman years as do their younger counterparts. Age plays a major role in the distribution of conditions with which patients present. These findings have broad implications for those responsible for administering programs to care for women, allocating research funds in women's health and geriatrics, and training physicians to meet this rapidly escalating demand.

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