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Vaginal administration of estrogens in postmenopausal urinary incontinence – evidence-based review

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Background & Aim: Urinary Incontinence has significant effects on the physical, psychological and social well-being, in addition to entailing high costs in health. Its prevalence increases with age. The decrease of circulating estrogen level in menopause leads to structural changes in the urogenital system, which has been associated with urinary incontinence. The aim of this study was to determine the effectiveness and safety of vaginal topical estrogens in the improvement of urinary incontinence complaints in postmenopausal women. **Method:** Research of clinical guidance standards, meta-analyses, systematic reviews and randomized clinical trials in MEDLINE, evidence-based medicine websites and bibliographic references of the selected articles. MeSH terms: “urinary incontinence”; “estrogens”; “postmenopause”; “administration, topical”, from January 2005 to October 2015, in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Results: From the research, 99 results were obtained. Of these, seven publications were included. One meta-analysis, that includes 34 articles, showed some evidence that the estrogens used locally (vaginal creams or suppositories) can improve incontinence, having been assigned a level of evidence 1. Three guidelines suggested a benefit of using vaginal topical estrogen, two with strength of recommendation A and one with strength of recommendation B. Three clinical trials have compared several types of vaginal topical estrogens, in distinct formulations, with different control groups, each of them being assigned a level of evidence 2. The results were discordant regarding the benefit of topical therapy associated with oral antimuscarinic.

Conclusions: There is evidence that the vaginal topical estrogens can have benefit in the improvement of urinary incontinence complaints in postmenopausal women, especially in the presence of vaginal atrophy (Strength of recommendation A). It is suggested to carry out randomized and controlled trials to assess the effectiveness and safety of this therapeutics in the long term.