



*Urinary Incontinence Treatment Network Newsletter*  
*Summer 2003*

**Congratulations! To date, you are one of 380 women enrolled in the UITN!**

### What is the UITN study?

The Urinary Incontinence Treatment Network is conducting a research study to compare the long-term outcomes of two common surgical procedures to treat urinary incontinence in women. These two procedures are known as the Burch procedure and the sling procedure. Both of these surgical procedures have been used for several decades, and the cure rates for both have been estimated at 60% to 90%. However, it is unclear whether one procedure is better than the other and should be offered to all women. This study will answer that question.

### What causes stress urinary incontinence?

Causes of stress urinary incontinence (SUI) include the following:

- ◆ weakened bladder and/or pelvic floor muscles
- ◆ weakened urethral sphincter

Risk factors for SUI are thought to include the following:

- ◆ gender
- ◆ age
- ◆ childbirth (vaginal delivery)
- ◆ obesity

### Incontinence **WEB** Resources:

<http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/health.htm>  
<http://www.simonfoundation.org/html/>  
<http://www.nafc.org/site2/index.html>  
<http://www.continet.org/>  
[http://www.auanet.org/index\\_hi.cfm](http://www.auanet.org/index_hi.cfm)  
<http://www.acog.org/>

### Patient Experience

Well, it has been just a little over six months since I had my UITN surgery and I am so grateful to Dr. David Lesser (Ob-Gyn Urogynecologist) for the beautiful job he did to give me back my lifestyle before this incontinence problem began. And, a special thanks to Shelly O'Meara for the moral support she gave me and all the questions she so gladly answered that I had always had, but was too embarrassed to discuss with anyone. I had the usual fears of anyone going into surgery (what if, what if). But, I was so tired of going through my daily "rituals" that I was willing to try anything to help my situation.

When it first started happening, (the leaking when I would cough, laugh, sneeze, stand up from a sitting position, etc.) I thought it was just a few freak accidents that didn't happen all the time, but that I would need to make sure I would empty my bladder at the slightest feeling of a full bladder. I had tried the Kegel exercises, (a girlfriend had told me that would help) trying to do up to 250 a day! I would usually lose count about 100 and so I was probably doing twice that many a day. This didn't seem to fix the problem either. No longer was I able to jog, play sports, ride horses, or even swim.

At first, I limited myself in where I would go and the things I would do, knowing that I could easily embarrass myself by leaking through my clothing. In fact, I had had several experiences that are too embarrassing to even want to recall. How about the time I was with my daughter in her new little sports car. She said something funny and I started laughing and of course leaked through my clothing and - not to mention her new car seat. How do you think I felt when I had to tell her I had wet my pants and needed to be taken home and then proceed to clean her car seat. That was just one of the humiliating situations I would find myself in. I'm sure many of you know exactly what I am trying to explain. I couldn't play with the grandchildren, afraid that if I bent down to pick one up, I would leak. Worse than that, I had a job teaching 1-3 yr olds in the nursery at my church and was afraid of the same thing in looking after 15 toddlers. (Knowing full well that at least one of them would need to be held, if not all of them during the two-hour period I had them). I would be down on the floor trying to play with them, have them crawling all over me and me meanwhile trying not to let them press on my bladder (getting up and down, trying not to leak was a treat). But then I finally discovered that I could wear a "night-time" pad everyday to catch all the leaking urine when I coughed, laughed, jumped, ran or even if I just stood up from a sitting position. Do you know how thick those things are? I felt like I was bow-legged half the time, or had just gotten off a horse. After doing (continued on next page)

this for two years, I discovered that I wouldn't have to wear as thick a pad if I would go to the restroom more often. So, I then graduated to the regular pad and was visiting the lady's room approximately every hour if not sooner to try to empty my bladder. Needless to say, I felt that I was "living" in the restrooms. I was still leaking, but not leaking through the medium pad if I followed that plan. I figure in a day, I would be spending at least 10 minutes finding a restroom and urinating approximately every hour during waking hours. That amounts to about 3 hours in an 18 hour day. I kept thinking of all the things I could have done, and would rather have done with all the time I was spending in the restroom. I sure would have rather read a great novel in that time! You know, come to think of it - if I would have used the same toilet every time I could have kept a book there and would have completed it in no time.

I think the worst was being in a training workshop or classroom and having the feeling that I would not be able to make it to the toilet before it would all come gushing out, and knowing that the pad would not hold it all. Or how about all the times I was at an outdoor event and not being able to find a toilet (Panic!!). Traveling by plane, hoping you can hold it during the take off or landing times when no one is allowed to use the restroom. Finding airport restrooms was another treat I did not look forward to.

Do you know how far that restroom sign looks when you think that you cannot make one more step without leaking all over the airport floor? Traveling by auto - believe me, I knew every pit stop along I-15 for the six hours it took us to get to our children's homes.

Well, the pad fixed my daytime and night-time losses pretty well. The next major problem was having intercourse. Now, I got to worry about losing urine during that special time with my husband. I know he had heartfelt sympathy for me in this area, but because I was so embarrassed about this it was now an unpleasant experience instead of the joy I felt before this problem.

I was soooo tired of this life style that I finally got up the nerve to go in and talk to Dr. David Lesser. I was willing to try anything in order not to have this life style ever again. After a few days in the hospital and three weeks of recovery at home, I was on my way back to building myself up again to be able to enjoy all the joys of a normal life style.

Hooray for the skillful hands of Dr. David Lesser, the compassionate service of Shelly O'Meara and the newest technology in this field.

**Submitted by CE (age 55)**

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