

HYPERSENSITIVE BLADDER

Bladder hypersensitivity, usually associated with urinary frequency and an urgent need to urinate, with or without bladder pain.

Hypersensitive bladder (HSB) is a term that has featured in both Japanese and an East Asian guidelines. Since there has been increasing interest around the world in the term hypersensitive bladder and some patients may be receiving a diagnosis of HSB or hypersensitivity of the bladder, it is perhaps a good idea to explain here what is meant by this term.

History

Hypersensitive bladder is not in fact a new term in the field of urology, but rather an older term from the nineteen eighties that has been revived in recent years to fill a gap and ensure that no patients are excluded from diagnosis and treatment.

In the field of interstitial cystitis, we find a mention of this in a report on the 1st NIDDK Workshop on interstitial cystitis which was held in 1987. This report notes that: *“Dr Edward J. McGuire discussed the pathophysiology of hypersensitive bladders and postulated that hypersensitivity most likely has a different neurological pathway than does reflex activity. The hypersensitive bladder indicates a subjective sensation of a need to void.”*

In 1988, the International Continence Society (ICS) published the Standardisation of Terminology of Lower Urinary Tract Function in which the authors defined the terms hypersensitive and hypersensitivity as follows:

- hypersensitive = increased bladder sensation on filling
- hypersensitivity = sensory urgency

Hypersensitive bladder revived

Revival of the term hypersensitive bladder was the direct result of introduction of the terms bladder pain syndrome and painful bladder syndrome by the IASP and the International Continence Society followed by ESSIC. While new definitions of PBS/BPS included unpleasant sensation, discomfort and pressure in addition to pain, many patients suffer from discomfort rather than pain and deny having pain when asked by the clinician. It was therefore felt by some clinicians that a name which included the word *pain* or *painful* would effectively exclude the discomfort group from diagnosis and research.

The term hypersensitive bladder (increased sensation of the bladder or urothelium) is currently used in East Asia as an umbrella term which encompasses bladder pain, discomfort, pressure or other unpleasant sensation, associated with disorders such as a frequent need to urinate day and night and/or an urgent need to urinate. It includes bladder pain syndrome. Patients with pain would be diagnosed as having BPS. Those without pain but with discomfort, pressure, irritation etc, associated with urinary frequency and/or an urgent need to void when there is very little urine in the bladder, and in whom there have been no cystoscopic findings indicative of Hunner lesion, would be diagnosed with hypersensitive bladder (HSB).

Guidelines

A Japanese guideline in 2009 suggested the term 'hypersensitive bladder syndrome' for the symptom syndrome associated with IC or IC-like conditions. This was shortly followed by a clinical guideline and algorithm for interstitial cystitis and hypersensitive bladder syndrome developed by an East Asian guideline committee as a revised form of the Japanese guideline and has been revised several times since.

French hypersensitivity proposal

A French research group in Nantes then developed a visceral hypersensitivity proposal affecting bladder, bowel, vulva, urethra and prostate, and this was presented at the 1st Sensory Bladder Meeting in 2012 and at the 1st World Congress on Abdominal & Pelvic Pain in 2013.

Since then, bladder hypersensitivity and visceral hypersensitivity have become commonly used terms in pain and urological fields worldwide.

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