

Identifying Continence Options after Stroke (ICONS): an evidence synthesis, case study and exploratory cluster randomised controlled trial of the introduction of a systematic voiding programme for patients with urinary incontinence after stroke in secondary care

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Urinary incontinence is common after stroke and can be very distressing for patients and their carers. We developed and tested a programme for assessing and treating incontinence while people are in hospital, designed to help them become continent again. The programme included bladder training, which encourages people to extend the time between voiding so that continence might be regained, and prompted voiding, which aims to improve bladder control using verbal prompts and positive reinforcement. Our study had two parts:

1. We developed the programme and tried it out in one stroke unit. We listened to what patients, families and clinical staff told us and made changes to improve the programme.
2. We tested if it was possible to recruit and retain patients, how best to deliver the programme and whether or not it was acceptable to patients and clinicians in a feasibility trial. In four of the units, we used *facilitation* as a strategy to support and enable staff to change their practice. We compared patients in these stroke units with those in four other units which did not introduce the programme.

We were able to recruit 413 patients and retain 85% and 88% at 6 and 12 weeks respectively. We found that patients who took part in the programme were no more likely to be continent 6, 12 or 52 weeks after the stroke than those who did not. However, we found that patients with urge incontinence were potentially more likely not to have urge incontinence at 12 weeks if they had received the programme.

We believe our programme may help some stroke survivors (particularly those with urge incontinence) to regain continence, so now we plan to test it further in a larger number of stroke services.

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