

**Abstract Title:** The Impact of Pessary on Prolapse Symptoms, Quality of Life and Body Image

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**Purpose & Rationale:** To evaluate if use of a vaginal pessary would improve body image, bother symptoms and quality of life in women with pelvic organ prolapse. Vaginal pessaries can be used as first-line treatment for symptomatic pelvic organ prolapse. Body image is an important part of a woman's well-being that should be taken into consideration when treating pelvic floor disorders.

**Research Question(s):** "Does the use of a vaginal pessary for at least 3 months improve body image, pelvic floor symptoms and quality of life in women with bothersome pelvic organ prolapse?"

**Synthesis of Review of Literature:** Self perception of body image is reduced in women with pelvic organ prolapse (Cundiff, 2000, Jelovsek, 2006). There are no prospective studies evaluating how vaginal pessaries impact body image perception in women with prolapse. Previous studies have demonstrated an improvement in prolapse symptoms and urinary symptoms with the use of vaginal pessary over short term follow-up (Komesu, 2007, Clemons, 2004). Surgery for symptomatic pelvic organ prolapse has been shown to improve body image and depressive symptoms in women (Lowder, 2007).

**Methods/Procedures:** IRB approval was obtained and all subjects signed informed consent. Women, age 18 and older, presenting for pessary fitting from February 2008 through June 2009 inclusive to the Hartford Hospital Urogynecology Division were eligible to participate. Subjects completed the short forms of Pelvic Floor Distress Inventory (PFDI-20), Pelvic Floor Impact Questionnaire (PFIQ) and a 9-item body image scale (BIS) prior to pessary fitting and at 3 month follow-up visits. Demographic information, medical co-morbidities and stage of prolapse based on the POP-Q system were collected. Scores on the questionnaires at baseline and in 3 months after successful pessary fitting were compared with paired t-test. A priori power analysis showed that a sample size of 50 subjects would have afforded 80% power to detect a difference of 4.4 in the means of the body image scores. Analyses were completed using SPSS v. 14.0 (SPSS Inc. Chicago, IL 2006) at the 0.05 significance level.

**Results:** A total of 78 subjects were enrolled and 24 (30.8%) subjects could not be fitted for a pessary, felt it did not work for them or desired surgery. Follow-up responses were available for 54 (69.2%) subjects. Among 51 women with valid BIS scores, there was a significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) lowering of the BIS score following pessary use, indicating an improvement in body image perception. PFDI-20 scores showed a significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) improvement following pessary use. PFIQ scores also showed a significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) improvement.

**Discussion/ Application to Practice:** Results strongly suggest that women who are successfully fitted with a pessary and use it for three months have significantly improved quality of life, less bother from prolapse symptoms and improved perception of body image. The results provide evidence-based information for practitioners to utilize when counseling women with vaginal prolapse regarding pessary use as a treatment option.