

# **The subjective experience and impact of nocturnal enuresis, with or without day-time urinary incontinence, on the adolescent – a systematic review**

Ryan Nichols<sup>1</sup>, Patrina Caldwell<sup>2,3</sup>, Jane Gauci<sup>1,2</sup>, Sarah Kilgour<sup>1</sup>

1. Department of Adolescent Medicine, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, New South Wales, 2. The University of Sydney, New South Wales, 3 Department of Nephrology, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, New South Wales.

## **Background:**

Nocturnal enuresis (NE) with or without daytime urinary incontinence (DUI) is a chronic childhood condition that can persist into adolescence, affecting about 1% of this age group. Despite significant personal impacts, the specific experiences of adolescents with NE/DUI are underrepresented in literature. This systematic review aims to provide a deeper understanding of the adolescent experience with NE/DUI to inform better service development and support strategies.

## **Methods:**

A systematic review was conducted following PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Studies focusing on the subjective experiences of adolescents (ages 10-19) with NE/DUI were included. Four databases (Medline, EMBASE, PsychInfo, ProQuest) were searched initially in January 2022, and reviewed June 2024, from inception to the present, with no language restrictions. An initial screening was performed by the lead author, followed by independent reviews. The Newcastle-Ottawa Scale and the Critical Appraisal Skills Program checklist were used to assess the risk of bias. Key findings from the included studies were extracted and thematically analysed.

## **Results:**

Out of 6066 initial papers, 83 were reviewed in detail, and 14 were selected for inclusion. Study designs included 8 case-control, 2 cross-sectional, and 4 semi-structured interview reports. Four themes emerged: (1) the stigma of wetting, (2) poor self-image and decreased wellbeing, (3) affected relationships, and (4) personal burden of incontinence. These themes reflected similar findings in existing literature on children and adolescents.

## **Conclusion:**

Adolescents with NE/DUI experience significant stigma, impaired self-esteem, and reduced quality of life. These impacts during a critical developmental period can affect adult health and social outcomes. Future research should focus specifically on adolescents to develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms.