Vaginal laser surgery shows some efficacy for overactive bladder syndrome

by **LOIS LEVINE, MA,**
ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

As any woman who experiences overactive bladder syndrome (OAB) can tell you, worrying about where the nearest restroom is whenever you leave your home can be a continuous source of anxiety.[1]

Until now, the most common treatments for OAB included behavior modification, pharmacologic management, injections, and localized nerve stimulation. However, recent study findings published in *Menopause*, the journal of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS), suggest that laser therapy for this condition, particularly the vaginal erbium yttrium aluminum garnet (YAG) laser, can cause less urination frequency and fewer urgency episodes, with the added benefit of reduced vaginal atrophy symptoms.[2]

In a single-center, blinded, randomized, sham-controlled study conducted between July 2019 and August 2022, 50 women experiencing postmenopause in Thailand who received a diagnosis of OAB received either a treatment session with the vaginal erbium YAG laser or the sham procedure, with 25 women assigned to each group. Participants were asked to be enrolled by using a convenience sampling method, with randomization done by computer-generated block randomization.

The primary outcome used the Thai version of the Overactive Bladder Symptom Score, whereas secondary outcomes included the Thai version of the Overactive Bladder Questionnaire, which included 25 health-related quality-of-life items. The Patient Perception of Bladder Condition questionnaire asked about patients' perception of lower urinary tract symptoms. A bladder diary, vaginal atrophy symptoms score, and a Vaginal Health Index score were also used.

Outcomes were evaluated 12 weeks after treatment. Investigators reported overall improvement in OAB severity in women receiving the laser treatment compared with the sham group. Improvements included daytime frequency, urgency episodes, and maximum urine volume (assessed by the bladder diary and vaginal atrophy signs and symptoms).

"The results of this small study showed some benefit of erbium YAG laser for the [management] of overactive bladder symptoms, with minimal adverse events at 12 weeks," said Stephanie Faubion, MD, MBA, FACP, NCMP, IF, medical director of NAMS.[1] ■

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