



Helping PeopleLive Healthier Lives

## Older Adults Say Urinary Incontinence Has Greater Impact on Quality of Life Than Diabetes, Arthritis and Other Chronic Conditions

- **Urinary incontinence adversely affects their mental, physical and social well-being, according to a new study by AARP Services, Inc., and UnitedHealthcare**
- **Study appears in June issue of *Quality of Life Research***
- **People 65 and over who suffer from urinary incontinence are encouraged to consult with their doctors to learn more about their treatment options**

**Minnetonka, Minn.** (June 7, 2011) – Americans 65 and over say that urinary incontinence affects their quality of life physically, mentally and socially to a greater degree than diabetes, arthritis and many other chronic conditions, according to a study by AARP Services, Inc., and UnitedHealthcare, a UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH) company.

The research appears in the June issue of *Quality of Life Research*.

The study, "The Prevalence of Urinary Incontinence and its Burden on the Quality of Life among Older Adults with Medicare Supplement Insurance," surveyed 15,000 enrollees in AARP® Medicare Supplement plans insured by UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company (for New York residents, UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company of New York) in 10 states.

Of the more than 5,000 respondents, more than 35 percent reported having urinary incontinence and, according to the study findings, the condition had a significant impact on their well-being and quality of life. The surveys helped to quantify respondents' average physical component scores and mental component scores, measures commonly used to evaluate health-related quality of life. As a result, researchers found that urinary incontinence had a stronger influence on quality of life than did diabetes, arthritis and some forms of cancer, particularly from a mental health standpoint.

The study also found that women and obese individuals are at greater risk of urinary incontinence and suggested that as baby boomers age, additional research is needed to determine which forms of incontinence are most responsive to prevention, early detection and treatment opportunities.

Left untreated, urinary incontinence may become more problematic over time, increasing in severity. Symptoms depend on the type of urinary incontinence, but can include a very strong urge to urinate, involuntary urination and unexpected leakage.

"Urinary incontinence is generally thought of as a physical disability. It is clear from this study, however, that urinary incontinence affects quality of life mentally and socially, as well as physically," said Dr. Richard J. Migliori, executive vice president, Business Initiatives and Clinical Affairs at UnitedHealth Group. "We believe this study highlights an opportunity for the health care system to develop treatment programs that can enhance not only their physical health, but their mental and emotional health as well."

"We have learned from this study that there are more ways we can help patients who suffer from urinary incontinence, as according to the data, only about half of those with urinary incontinence said they have spoken to their doctor about the problem, and only about one in three of them have received treatment for it," said Dr. Charlotte S. Yeh, chief medical officer, AARP Services, Inc. "We encourage people 65 and over who suffer from urinary incontinence to consult with their doctors and learn more about their treatment options."

This is the first in a series of research studies from the Health Care Transformation Diversity Initiative, which was created to evaluate the presence and nature of disparities in health care in AARP members who purchase Medicare Supplement plans (i.e., Medigap coverage) insured by UnitedHealthcare (or for New York residents, UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company of New York). Information from these studies may guide efforts to help ameliorate these disparities in the future.

### Methodology

Data for this study were obtained from the Health Update Survey (HUS), which contains questions on demographics, other health conditions, and the Veterans RAND 12 item health status survey. The mail survey was fielded on a random sample of 15,000 insureds from 10 states in 2008. Respondents were divided into those with UI and others, based on their response to a question about leaking urine during the last six months. Univariate and multivariate analyses were conducted to estimate the likelihood of urinary incontinence and its impact on quality of life while controlling for respondent demographics and other health conditions.

**About AARP Services, Inc.**

AARP Services, Inc., founded in 1999, is a wholly-owned taxable subsidiary of AARP. AARP Services manages the provider relationships for and performs quality control oversight of the wide range of products and services that carry the AARP name and are made available by independent providers as benefits to AARP's millions of members. The provider offers currently span health products, financial products, travel and leisure products, and life event services. Specific products include Medicare supplemental insurance; credit cards, auto and home, mobile home and motorcycle insurance, life insurance and annuities; member discounts on rental cars, cruises, vacation packages and lodging; special offers on technology and gifts; pharmacy services; legal services; and long-term care insurance. AARP Services also engages in new product development activities for AARP and provides certain consulting services to outside companies. In 2005, AARP Services founded AARP Financial Inc., a wholly-owned taxable subsidiary that provides access to proprietary investment products and services, including mutual funds and financial guidance, designed to meet the needs of investors at any life stage.

**About UnitedHealthcare**

UnitedHealthcare is dedicated to helping people nationwide live healthier lives by simplifying the health care experience, meeting consumer health and wellness needs, and sustaining trusted relationships with care providers. The company offers the full spectrum of health benefit programs for individuals, employers and Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, and contracts directly with more than 650,000 physicians and care professionals and 5,000 hospitals nationwide. UnitedHealthcare serves more than 38 million people and is one of the businesses of UnitedHealth Group, a diversified Fortune 50 health and well-being company.

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