

HIPS/17/09 – Longitudinal study of pelvic floor dysfunction, and its relationship with childbirth (ProLong20+)

Long-term consequences of childbirth on urinary incontinence (UI), faecal incontinence (FI) and pelvic organ prolapse (collectively, pelvic floor dysfunction, PFD) are poorly understood. PFD affects many women, causing distress and impaired quality-of-life. In 1993-94 we recruited 8000 women three months after giving birth (ProLong study). They completed a questionnaire at 6 years when 45%/10% had UI/FI, and at 12 years when 53%/13% had UI/FI. Prolapse was measured at 12 years and found in 24%. We now wish to contact ProLong women again, around the menopause when PFD may be even more common. Women would receive a questionnaire and be invited for pelvic floor examination. We would combine our questionnaire and examination data with women's NHS data about PFD treatment received, to report how common PFD is, and how it relates to childbirth and other risk factors, particularly the menopause. The proposed research constitutes the longest ever prospective follow-up of post-natal PFD worldwide. Findings will inform estimates of future need for treatment and research, and ultimately improve women's health during and after pregnancy.