

WG 2 (Preventive Medicine and Healthcare Policies)

Urinary Tract Infections Among Women in Military Service

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Background:

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are among the most common bacterial infections, predominantly affecting young, sexually active women. While generally benign, UTIs cause significant discomfort and negatively impact quality of life. Studies from Western countries report high UTI incidence and recurrence rates, but no prior research has examined the prevalence among Israeli women, particularly female soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Military service conditions, including limited access to bathrooms, crowded living spaces, and poor sanitation, may increase UTI risk.

Purpose:

This study aimed to estimate UTI incidence among IDF female soldiers, identify occupational and behavioral risk factors, assess perceptions, and propose preventive measures.

Methods:

This study comprised three studies: (1) a historical cohort analysis of 389,254 female soldiers (2000–2015) using IDF medical databases, (2) qualitative interviews with 15 female soldiers and commanders regarding experiences and perceptions of UTIs, and (3) a cross-sectional survey of 689 participants to examine risk factors and hygiene behaviors.

Results:

Results showed that 34.8% of female soldiers had at least one UTI during service, with 43.7% experiencing recurrence. Combat soldiers had the highest UTI risk, while office workers and officers had significantly lower risks. Identified risk factors included prior UTI history, poor sanitation, service in field conditions, and lack of access to clean toilets. Education level was inversely associated with UTI risk, though mediation factors such as knowledge and behaviors had minimal impact.

Conclusions:

The findings highlight UTIs as a widespread issue among female IDF soldiers, influenced by environmental and occupational factors. Preventive strategies should focus on improving sanitary conditions, promoting hydration, and implementing health education programs. Further research is needed to develop tailored interventions for different military roles and ensure better management of UTIs among female soldiers.

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Exploring the Impact of Women's Integration in Israeli Defense Forces

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Background:

The conscription of women in Israel predates the state's establishment, with female citizens serving in diverse roles, including combat and frontline positions. Israeli law mandates compulsory service for all citizens, regardless of gender.

Purpose:

This study aims to examine the significance of women's service across various military roles for all service members, exploring pertinent issues and contributing to the broader perception of women's military service in Israel and internationally.

Methods:

A systematic review analysis was conducted, synthesizing findings from previous studies by the Behavioral Sciences Division, Medical Corps, IDF Senior Command Schools, and other relevant sources. Recurring themes and significant findings were identified and presented in this study.

Results:

Women's contributions to the IDF have been substantial and evolving. The 1970s and 1980s saw an expansion of roles available to women, while a High Court petition in the 1990s opened pilot courses to female recruits. Currently, women are actively participating in elite units such as Unit 669 and the IDF Special Operations Command. Women's service extends beyond equal opportunity initiatives and compliance with Israeli basic laws; it significantly benefits the military system. In some ranks, women constitute a higher percentage than men, including key combat and combat support roles.

Conclusions:

Continued efforts are necessary to further integrate women into the Israeli military. Ongoing research and engagement are crucial to identify and implement necessary adjustments and relevant support systems for women in specific roles or operational contexts.