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Prospective study of colonic irrigation for the treatment of defaecation disorders.

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BACKGROUND: Retrograde colonic irrigation is a possible treatment for defaecation disorders when conservative treatment or surgery has failed. The aim of this prospective study was to investigate its effectiveness. **METHODS:** Patients were divided into three groups: those with faecal incontinence (A), constipation (B) or both (C). The Biotrol Irrimatic pump or the irrigation bag was used for colonic irrigation. Patients completed a questionnaire at baseline and after 3, 6 and 12 months, as well as a Short Form 36 health survey and an American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgery quality of life questionnaire at baseline and after 6 months. **RESULTS:** The study included 39 patients (26 women; mean age 58.0 years). In group A, 11 of 18 patients were pseudocontinent for faeces at 3 months ($P < 0.001$). Parks' incontinence scores decreased for all patients in this group at 3 months ($P < 0.001$), 6 months ($P = 0.036$) and 1 year ($P = 0.005$). In group B, three of ten patients reported a major improvement. The mean score for the feeling of incomplete evacuation decreased at 3 months ($P = 0.007$), 6 months ($P = 0.013$) and 1 year ($P = 0.036$). In group C, six of ten patients became pseudocontinent for faeces ($P = 0.009$) and three reported improvement in constipation. The overall quality of life scores improved ($P = 0.012$). **CONCLUSION:** Retrograde colonic irrigation is an undervalued but effective alternative treatment for intractable defaecation disorders.

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