

Sexual Health Experiences of Older Men: Health Care Professionals' Perspectives

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Abstract : Sexual health is an important aspect of overall wellbeing. This study aimed to explore the sexual health experiences of men aged 50 years and over from the perspective of health care professional participants who were specializing in sexual health care and who consulted with older men. A total of ten interviews were conducted. Eleven themes were identified regarding men's experiences with sexual health care as reported by participants. 1) Biologically focused: older male clients focus largely on the biological aspect of their sexual health without consideration of other factors which might affect their functioning. 2) Psychological concerns: there is an interaction between mental and sexual health but older male clients do not necessarily see this. 3) Medicalization of sexual functioning: advances in medicine that aid with erectile difficulties which consequently mean that older men tend to favor a medical solution to their sexual concerns. 4) Masculine identity: sexual health concerns are linked to older male clients' sense of masculinity. 5) Penile functionality: most concerns that older male clients have center on their penile functionality. 6) Relationships: many male clients seek sexual help as they believe it improves relationships. Conversely, having supportive partners may mean older male clients focus less on the physicality of sex. 7) Grief and loss: men experience grief and loss - the loss of their sexual functioning, grief from loss of a long-term partner, and loss of intimacy and privacy when moving from independent living to residential care. 8) Social stigma: older male clients experience stigma around aging sexuality and sex in general. 9) Help-seeking behavior: older male clients will usually seek mechanistic solution for biological sexual concerns, such as medication used for penile dysfunction. 10) Dismissed by health care professionals: many older male clients seek specialist sexual health care without the knowledge of their doctors as they feel dismissed due to lack of expertise, lack of time, and the doctor's personal attitudes and characteristics. Finally, 11) Lack of resources: there is a distinct lack of resources and training to understand sexuality for healthy older men. These findings may inform future research, professional training, public health campaigns and policies for sexual health in older men.

Keywords : ageing, biopsychosocial model, men's health, sexual health

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