

Sex and Cancer: what can we do?

Abstract

Sexual dysfunction is one of the most prevalent and distressing treatment side effects for female cancer survivors. Although cancer survivorship guidelines include recommendations to discuss female sexual function, it is well established that the majority of women do not receive necessary information, support or treatment regarding sexual side effects of cancer treatments.

Cancer can devastate the body and impair sexual function and body image. Furthermore, all primary modalities of cancer treatment (surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and hormonal therapy) have the potential to negatively impact sexual function. The main sexual disorders include loss of sexual desire, genital sensation and lubrication difficulty, orgasm difficulty, dyspareunia. Sexual concerns are impacted by psychological, biological, and interpersonal factors, and a multidisciplinary approach to treatment allows clinicians to comfortably inquire, assess and refer if treatment is beyond their comfort or expertise. Assessment and identification by clinicians can be done efficiently and easily and includes acknowledging how common sexual dysfunction is amongst cancer survivors.

The workshop aims to provide tools to offer cancer patients adequate care, taking into account a biopsychosocial perspective. Working with cancer patients must include a multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, the workshop emphasizes collaboration between gynecologists and sex therapists to train learners towards this multidisciplinary model.

Chairs and facilitators biography

Ludovica Scotto

Ludovica Scotto is a psychologist psychotherapist working in the Psychoncology Division at the European Institute of Oncology since 2017. In 2016 she specialized as sexual counselor. In her clinical practice, she works as psychoncologist and she holds sexual counseling for singles or couples at the Integrated Sexological Clinic in collaboration with the Division of Preventive Gynaecology. She has conducted several research programs about recovery of sexual well-being in oncological patients, before during and after cancer treatments. Her scientific publications are mainly focused on psychological outcomes affecting cancer care pathway.

Florence Didier

Florence Didier, clinical psychologist, psychotherapist, sexual counsellor is currently working in the Psycho- oncology Division of the European Institute of Oncology. She contributed to implement Psycho-social interventions for patients and their families since 1996 to facilitate patient's and family resilience. She has participated in many studies aimed at evaluating the psychological distress in cancer patients, the psychological impact of breast reconstructive surgery, satisfaction with cosmetic outcomes and its impact on sexuality. She performed many training programs for nurses and physicians to manage emotional stress. She collaborates at the Integrated Sexological Clinic in collaboration with the Division of Preventive Gynaecology at IEO.

Eleonora Petra Preti

Eleonora Petra Preti is gynaecologist at European Institute of Oncology. She has a long experience in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of the pathology of the lower genital tract, with specific expertise for HPV-related diseases and vulvar pathology. She has developed a decade of experience in laser surgery. She specialized as a clinical sexologist. In 2016 she was the promoter of the Integrated Sexological Clinic in collaboration with the Division of Psychoncology. She is an active member of American Society of Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology and counsellor in Executive Council of International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Diseases.

Sheryl Kingsberg

Dr. Sheryl Kingsberg is division chief of behavioral medicine at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center and Professor at Case Western Reserve University. Her areas of clinical specialization include female sexual disorders, menopause, pregnancy and postpartum mood disorders, and psychological aspects of infertility. Her research interests are in treatments for female sexual disorders and menopause. Dr. Kingsberg has over 100 peer-reviewed publications and numerous book chapters and has co-edited a textbook on treating female sexual disorders. She is a past president of The North American Menopause Society and The International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health.

Rossella Nappi

Rossella Nappi is Full Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the Department of Clinical, Surgical, Diagnostic and Pediatric Sciences at the University of Pavia. Gynecologist, endocrinologist and sexologist at the Research Center for Reproductive Medicine and Unit of Gynecological Endocrinology & Menopause, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, IRCCS San Matteo Foundation in Pavia. She has studied menstrual cycle dysfunction, premenstrual syndrome, menopausal symptoms and related diseases. She has been a clinician and a researcher at the mean time and she has published several papers and book chapters, both national and international, in the field of physiopathology and psychobiology of reproduction.

Fabio Giommi

Fabio Giommi, PsyD in Clinical Psychology and in Cognitive Psychotherapy, has been working as senior researcher at the Radboud University of Nijmegen, NL, on multidisciplinary research project on mindfulness meditation.

He has devoted himself to the clinical applications of mindfulness at Jon Kabat-Zinn's Center for Mindfulness at the Medical school of the University of Massachusetts, and at the other international pioneers. He devotes himself to clinical practice, dissemination and training as director of Nous - School of Specialization in Cognitive-Constructivist Psychotherapy. Founding member and president of Italian Association for Mindfulness. He is authored of several scientific publications and books.