

Communication and Intimacy in PD



UW Medicine

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Parkinson's Disease: What You Already Know



- Neurological disorder
 - Resting tremor
 - Bradykinesia
 - Rigidity
 - Gait/walking changes
 - Postural instability

Parkinson's Disease: What You Might Already Know

- Neuropsychiatric disorder
 - Cognitive impairment (19-50%)
 - Depression (45%)
 - Anxiety (40%)
 - Fatigue and Apathy (45-50%)
 - Psychosis (20-40%)
 - Sleep disorders (60-90%)
 - Addictions (7-10%)
 - Sexual dysfunction (2-90?!%)

Parkinson's Disease: What You Might Already Know

- Neuropsychiatric disorder
 - 60-80%
 - Disability
 - Treatment challenges
 - Quality of life
 - Cognition
 - Mood
 - Intimacy
 - Sexual functioning

Parkinson's Disease: Neurological and Psychological

- Depression, Anxiety and Fatigue
 - Mostly mild to moderate
 - Occurs in any stage
 - Exogenous vs. endogenous
 - Significant overlap between PD and MDD
 - Psychomotor slowing
 - Concentration problems
 - Sleeping difficulties
 - Diminished appetite
 - Decreased sexual desire



Myths and Barriers

- Older adults do not want to remain sexually active
- Older adult sex will be dysfunctional
- Sexual dysfunction cannot be treated in older adults
- Those with cognitive/neurological loss cannot perform sexually
- Sexually transmitted diseases are not spread among older adults
- People have resolved all their sexual issues by the time they reach old age



Sexuality and PD: Barriers

- Most doctors and nurses don't ask!
 - Some don't want to know
- Time limits
- Perceived as “less important”
- Shame
- Embarrassment

Parkinson's: Sexual Changes

- Predictors of sexual dysfunction
 - Age
 - Severity of disease
 - Other diseases
 - Previous dysfunction
 - Depression

Parkinson's: Sexual Changes

- Decreased Drive
 - Neurochemical
 - Endocrinological
 - Neurobiological
 - Hormonal
 - Autonomic nervous system changes
 - Pain
 - Depression

Parkinson's: Sexual Changes

- Other Major Factors
 - Motor impairments
 - Rigidity, tremor, impaired mobility in bed
 - Changed appearance
 - Sweating, drooling, odor, gait disturbance
 - Masked faces
 - Difficult to read affection and desire
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Bed separation
 - Fatigue
 - Change in roles

Parkinson's: Sexual Changes

- Increased Drive
 - Relatively rare?
 - Usually caused by treatments
 - Medication
 - Surgery
 - Can be organic

Parkinson's: Sexual Changes

- But is SD really related to PD?
 - Similar levels of function/dysfunction in other groups
 - Arthritis
 - Depression
 - Unemployed



Sexuality and PD: Gender Differences

- Women
 - Arousal problems (88%)
 - Delayed or absent orgasm (75%)
 - Low desire (47%)
 - Sexual dissatisfaction (38%)
- Men
 - Erectile dysfunction (68%)
 - Sexual dissatisfaction (65%)
 - Premature ejaculation (41%)
 - Delayed or absent orgasm (40%)

Sexuality and PD: Treatments



- **First and foremost- talk to each other**
 - Counseling, if needed
- **Second- talk to your doctor**
 - Referral to a specialist, if needed
- **Men**
 - Viagra/Cialis (watch out for hypotension)
 - Injections, pumps, vacuum devices, prosthesis
- **Women**
 - Oral estrogens, creams, lubricants
 - Added stimulation

Sexuality and PD: Pragmatics



- Recognize and address emotional stress
- Demonstrate love, respect, warmth and togetherness in non-sexual ways
- Talk frankly and openly about sexual needs
- Experiment with different routines (e.g., switch lovemaking to the morning)

Sexuality and PD: Pragmatics



- Emphasize foreplay, touching and kissing rather than penetration
- Explore and practice different, comfortable positions for successful and pleasurable penetration
- Adopt new sexual roles according to you and your partner's abilities
- Find new solutions for physical stimulation (touch, arousal, orgasm)

A Few Final Words on Acceptance



Acceptance is:

the nonjudgmental acknowledgement of “what is.”

Acceptance is not:

giving up, throwing in the towel, or quitting

Acceptance is also not:

the gnashing of teeth, beating of one’s head against the same wall over and over or swearing at the universe

Perhaps the Final Word on Acceptance?



**“I can’t fight this, so I might
as well dance with it and
lead as much as possible.”**



Thank you for your attention!



Questions?

Contact Information

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<https://depts.washington.edu/mbwc/>

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