Recommendations for the Clinical Evaluation of Men and Women with Sexual Dysfunction

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DOI: 10.1111/j.1743-6109.2009.01619.x

ABSTRACT

Introduction. The challenge in the field of sexual medicine is to develop evidence-based principles for clinical evaluation and create a uniform, widely accepted diagnostic and treatment approach for all sexual problems and dysfunctions, for both genders.

Aim. To provide recommendations for the broad approach for assessing sexual problems in a medical practice setting; to develop an evidence-based diagnostic and treatment algorithm for men and women with sexual dysfunctions.

Methods. The PubMed literature was reviewed. Expert opinion was based on the grading of evidence-based medical literature and the Delphi consensus process.

Results. The Committee determined three principles for clinical evaluation and management: (i) adoption of a patient-centered framework, with emphasis on cultural competence in clinical practice; (ii) application of evidence-based medicine in diagnostic and treatment planning; (iii) use of a unified management approach in evaluating and treating sexual problems in both men and women. The International Consultation in Sexual Medicine-5 stepwise diagnostic and treatment algorithm was developed for that purpose. According to this algorithm, sexual, medical, and psychosocial history is mandatory whereas physical examination and laboratory tests are highly recommended in most cases. Furthermore, the Brief Sexual Symptom Checklist (BSSC) for Men and BSSC for Women, and more recently the Sexual Complaints Screener (SCS) for Men and SCS for Women, were all endorsed for screening purposes. A classification system was also defined; clinically, sexual dysfunctions are categorized in three types according to their etiology (Type I: psychogenic; Type II: organic; Type III: mixed). Final recommendations on specialized diagnostic tests were based on level of evidence.

Conclusions. A unified diagnostic and management strategy in sexual medicine, irrespective of condition and gender, would improve patients' sexual well-being. It would also lead to the development of academic curricula to provide practicing physicians across specialties with the needed skills to meet contemporary patients' needs in sexual medicine health-care delivery. Hatzichristou D, Rosen RC, Derogatis LR, Low WY, Meuleman EJH, Sadovsky R, and Symonds T. Recommendations for the clinical evaluation of men and women with sexual dysfunction. J Sex Med 2010;7:337-348.

Key Words. Sexual Dysfunction; Sexual Medicine; Diagnosis; Management; Algorithm