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Sexuality and primary healthcare: How can we talk about sex?

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According to the World Health Organization, sexuality is a key aspect of the human being, encompassing sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, eroticism, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is broader than the individual experience of sex and it can and should be addressed on consultations as part of a person-centered medical approach. Despite the elevated prevalence of sexual related problems, Sexuality-related Communication (SRC) is often neglected by the General Practitioner. How can we do it and why are we so oblivious to this issue? Are we prepared to do so? Pre-graduate training is scarce and heterogeneous between the profusion of Medical faculties. Post-graduate training is expensive and mainly focused on dysfunction rather than functionality or part of a relationship. Nevertheless, patients expect their doctors to address the topic and studies show that sexual health concerns may never be voiced if the patient is left with the responsibility to introduce it. The lack of comfort, the reluctance to talk about sexuality or the fear of offending the patients limits our performance and makes SRC less clear or objective than it should be, decreasing our ability to educate our patients regarding Sexual Health. Sexual health should be a cornerstone of preventive medicine. In order to improve our skills we must bring SRC to light, face our limitations. Only then we'll be able to enhance our performance on consultation and create strategies to improve our quality of care to populations.

Biography

Carla Veiga Rodrigues has completed her Master's in 'Risky behaviors on a student's population from Vila Nova de Gaia' from the Health Sciences School at University of Minho. She is currently a GP resident at UCSP São Neutel, Chaves and is an emergency Doctor on the Medical Vehicle of INEM (National Institute of Medical Emergency). She takes a special interest in adolescence and sexuality, being a founding member of FIMS (Iberic Federation of Medicine and Sexuality). She also focuses on communication skills and presented a workshop on motivational interviewing in Wonca Europe 2016 and is currently writing a book on the subject.

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