Moving Beyond Cancer To A New Normal in Intimacy For Men & Their Partners

Presented by
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WHO Definition of Sexuality

- Central aspect of being human throughout life
- Includes but not limited to: sex; gender identities and roles; sexual orientation; eroticism; pleasure; intimacy & reproduction
- Can be experienced and expressed in: thoughts; fantasies; desires; beliefs; attitudes; values; behaviors; practices; roles & relationships
- Influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious & spiritual factors
The BIG “C”…
…It Changes Everything!!
Healthy Sexuality is Important Aspect of Survivorship

- Quality of Life issue
- May help in prevention of recurrences by boosting immune system
Challenges To Intimacy With Treatment

• Nausea
• Fatigue
• Depression
• Aching Muscles and Joints
• PAIN
Michael Perelman’s “Sexual Tipping Point” Model
Ongoing Challenges After Treatment

• Numbness
• Change in Body Image
• Urinary Incontinence
• Erectile Dysfunction
• Painful Orgasm
• Loss of Desire
Urinary Incontinence

• Huge quality of life issue
• Kegel exercises are helpful
• Constriction ring can prevent leaking
• Consult with pelvic physiotherapist is essential
  • Ideally prior to treatment
Sexual Function is Quality of Life Issue

- One study found nearly half of cancer survivors experience ongoing problems
- Sexuality usually not priority at time of Dx
- Physical and emotional demands of cancer treatment can interfere with maintaining active sex life
- Return to sexual activity after cancer can help patients feel whole and healthy
  - Sexual pleasure as therapeutic touch
Common Myths About Sex & Cancer

• Sex makes cancer grow
• Sex causes cancer
• Remaining celibate will help cure cancer
• Cancer is contagious through sex
• Bodily changes that result from cancer and treatment make individual unattractive to partner

• Schover, L. Sexuality and Fertility After Cancer, 1997
• Sex is important at any age
• Must maintain “regular” sexual connection
• Accurate knowledge required for realistic expectations
  • Physical
  • Psychological
  • Relational
• Sexuality is defined as mutual pleasure rather than intercourse
• Realize critical importance of promoting desire in relationship
• Psychosexual skills and willingness to change “sexual script”
• Adopt desire, pleasure, eroticism and satisfaction as goals
  • Metz and McCarthy. *Enduring Desire*, 2011
Sexual Scripts

• Unique combination of feelings, behaviors and meanings that an individual has learned regarding sexual behavior
• The “who, what, when and where” related to one’s own sexual activity
• When cancer treatment causes changes in the anatomy or physiology of sexual organs, the survivor’s sexual script may not work for them, and sexual activity may cease
Revising the Sexual Script

• Following cancer treatment, individuals can reach a “new normal” in sexual function

• Those who previously had more complicated sexual scripts are less likely to be negatively impacted to the same degree

• Partner involvement is crucial...if partner available
Sex Should Be a JOY, Not a JOB!
Optimal Physical Health Important For Sexual Health

• Physical activity, especially with one’s mate, is SO IMPORTANT!!
  • 30 minutes daily
  • Activities that improve flexibility, like yoga, are also important

• Sleep is critical to maintain levels of testosterone, the hormone of desire.

• Nutrition and Weight Management
Mediterranean Diet Can Improve Sexual Function

• Study of 59 women with Metabolic Syndrome, which is associated with increased risk of sexual dysfunction

• FSFI (Female Sexual Function Index) improved significantly after using Mediterranean diet two years

• C-reactive protein levels reduced significantly in treatment group

Workout
TOGETHER: Maximize a Positive Connection with One’s Mate thru Endorphin Release
Erectile Dysfunction = Endothelial Damage
Male Anatomy

- Bladder
- Corpus Cavernosum
- Corpus Spongiosum
- Glans (head) of the Penis
- Foreskin
- Seminal Vesicle
- Prostate Gland
- Urethra
- Vas Deferens
- Testicle
What is Penile Rehabilitation???

Weights are not involved!
Concept Of Penile Rehabilitation

- Term was first used in 2006. Based on research that suggests loss of nocturnal/daily erections leads to poor corpus cavernosum oxygenation and penile atrophy.
- Result is venous leakage.
- Smooth muscle is replaced by fibrous tissue.
- Over 600 urologists surveyed in 2009 reported prescribing PR PDE-5i medications most commonly used.
Concept Of Penile Rehabilitation

• Term was first used in 2006
• Based on research that suggests loss of nocturnal/daily erections leads to poor corpus cavernosum oxygenation and penile atrophy
• Result is venous leakage, and erection cannot be maintained
• If smooth muscle is replaced by fibrous tissue, scarring occurs
• Over 600 urologists surveyed in 2009 reported prescribing PR
• PDE-5i medications most commonly used
Goal: Maximize Erectile Function Recovery Through Use of Available Medications and Devices

- Phosphodiesterase Type 5 Inhibitors (Viagra, Cialis, Levitra)
- Vacuum Erection (Constriction) Device
- Intraurethral Alprostadil (MUSE)
- Penile Injections
Vascular Demands of CC Tissue

- CS
- Urethra
- Cavernous artery
- CC
- Buck's fascia
- Tunica albuginea
- Dorsal artery
- Deep dorsal vein
Randomized to double-blind sildenafil (50 or 100mg) or placebo
Nightly dose beginning at 4 weeks postop for total of 36 weeks
Seven-fold increase in return of erectile function with sildenafil
No significant difference between 50 and 100 mg dose
Confirms importance of timing of penile rehabilitation
Vacuum Erectile Device

(It’s not just for Austin Powers, anymore!)
Penile Injections
MYTH:

Erection is required for a man to have an orgasm
Painful Orgasms

• May occur following pelvic surgery or radiation
• Result from scar formation
• Can be treated with pelvic physiotherapy
Great Sex Without Intercourse

“Remove the belief... that sex is intercourse and those non-erect penises become nonproblematic. That’s what modern older people need—a new way to think about sex so they can be sexual regardless of physical capacity.”

-SIECUS, New Expectations, 2003
Intimacy without Erections

• Couples can develop new sexual scripts when erections are either not reliable or not possible any longer.

• Explore new ways of relating on a physical level to maintain intimacy and even improve their sex lives despite lack of reliable erections.
Myth:

Sex Should ALWAYS Be Exceptional!
Common Myths Lead To

Unreasonable Expectations

Anxiety and Stress
Self-doubt
Inadequacy
Low Self-esteem
MYTH:

Sex Must Be Spontaneous
Like All Good Things In Life, Sex Requires...

• Attention
• Effort
• Planning
HONEY! PLEASE!
IT'S THE SUPER BOWL....

TRUE.

OTHER VIEWS
Androgen Deprivation Therapy

• Used in advanced stage prostate cancer to remove testosterone from body
• Sometimes called “hormone therapy”, shot of LHRH agonist, Lupron, given @ 1-6 mos
• Immediate side-effects are hot flashes and night sweats
• Fatigue and weight gain are common
• Loss of sexual interest and erectile dysfunction also occur
Successful Couples

Value sensual touch and emotional connection along with sexual activity and orgasm
“Quality Sex Is A Growth Process”
Metz & McCarthy, *Enduring Desire*

- Built slowly over time
- Strengthened by overcoming normal challenges
- Adapts to constant change as intimate team
- Values conflict as reflection of each individual uniqueness
- Empathy for partner is crucial
- Affectionate touch and non-demand pleasuring are critical elements
Sensate Focus

• Allows couples to explore touch as a means to expand sexual experience

• Helps couples rewrite their sexual scripts

• Develop physical touch, massage, and caressing as means of connecting as a couple

• Foley, et al, 2002. *Sex Matters for Women*
Mindfulness Technique

• Particularly useful if one is easily distracted during lovemaking
• Focus on the pleasure of arousal
• Be aware of partner’s response to touch
• Stay “in the moment”
• Remember that pleasure is the goal