

Background and Introduction

Physical therapists, as movement specialists and promoters of whole health and wellness, are uniquely positioned to consider sexual functioning when physical ability is impaired. Sexual problems are common and associated with a myriad of health conditions. However, the topic of sexual activity is often not addressed, despite patients' requests, and clinicians report feeling underprepared for these conversations. To address this, a longitudinal curriculum was developed for DPT students to understand patient-reported limitations in sexual activity and to provide evidence-based communication tools and practical advice for use in practice. The purpose of this session is to describe the curriculum and provide the tools utilized for addressing sexual activity concerns as part of patient-centered physical therapy management.

Methods and/or Description of Project

A longitudinal curriculum was designed by considering students' progression through the larger DPT curriculum, the timing of clinical education experiences, and timing of patient management courses. In the first-year curriculum, students engage in an exploration of personal and professional values and professional communication and behaviors. Second year students further develop communication skills with an emphasis on evidence-based communication models such as motivational interviewing. In addition, students apply communication skills to patient cases across a variety of health conditions. The second-year curriculum also includes class sessions to discuss sex and disability and understanding the role sexual health has for patients' whole health. The longitudinal curriculum culminates in the third year in an advanced patient management course. This course emphasizes advanced clinical reasoning activities using the ICF model for clinical decision making using patient cases representing a variety of settings. This course also includes shared specific suggestions and resources about sexual health for patients, providers, and partners. As part of this process, survey data, using the Students' Attitudes towards Addressing Sexual Health (SA-SH), was collected in the second and third years of the curriculum.

Results/Outcomes

Generally, survey results suggest that students feel the topic of sexual health is important to address with patients, yet they feel underprepared to do so. Students expressed concerns about interpersonal dynamics including factors of gender, age, and culture as barriers to confidently address sexual health with their patients. Students have responded positively to the longitudinal curriculum and report high satisfaction with the courses in which these topics are placed. Students have also reported high value in having this training as part of their curriculum and that they have applied it to their clinical experiences. Faculty and students of the curriculum have identified need to expand the topics to include special populations and more diversity to further meet the needs of all patients.

Conclusions/Relevance to the conference theme

A longitudinal curriculum for addressing sexual health for patients was successfully created as part of a larger DPT curriculum and that students place high value on this content. This curricular approach could advance current concepts in fostering a culture of patient centered

care in DPT education by providing student with the tools needed to fully address patients' needs.