

ADDRESSING SEXUAL ACTIVITY FOR PATIENTS ACROSS HEALTH CONDITIONS: A LONGITUDINAL CURRICULUM FOR DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY STUDENTS

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Background

- Sexual problems are common and associated with a myriad of health conditions.
- Physical therapists, as movement specialists and promoters of whole health and wellness, are uniquely positioned to consider sexual functioning when physical ability is impaired.
- 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.

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to describe the longitudinal curriculum, describe significant student responses to the survey, and share insights from the curriculum.

Description of the Project

- Longitudinal curriculum (Figure 1) designed considered students' progression through the DPT curriculum:
 - First-year:** exploration of personal and professional values and professional communication and behaviors.
 - Second year:** application of evidence-based communication models across a variety of health conditions. Consideration of sex, disability, and sexual health as part of patients' whole health. Appreciate the role of PT in promoting sexual health and well-being.
 - Third year:** advanced clinical reasoning applied to variety of patient cases and settings. Specific suggestions and resources provided about sexual health for patients, providers, and partners.
- Ongoing survey data collection
 - Students' Attitudes towards Addressing Sexual Health (SA-SH) used to understand student perspective on topic (Figure 2).

Longitudinal Curriculum



Year 1: Personal and professional values



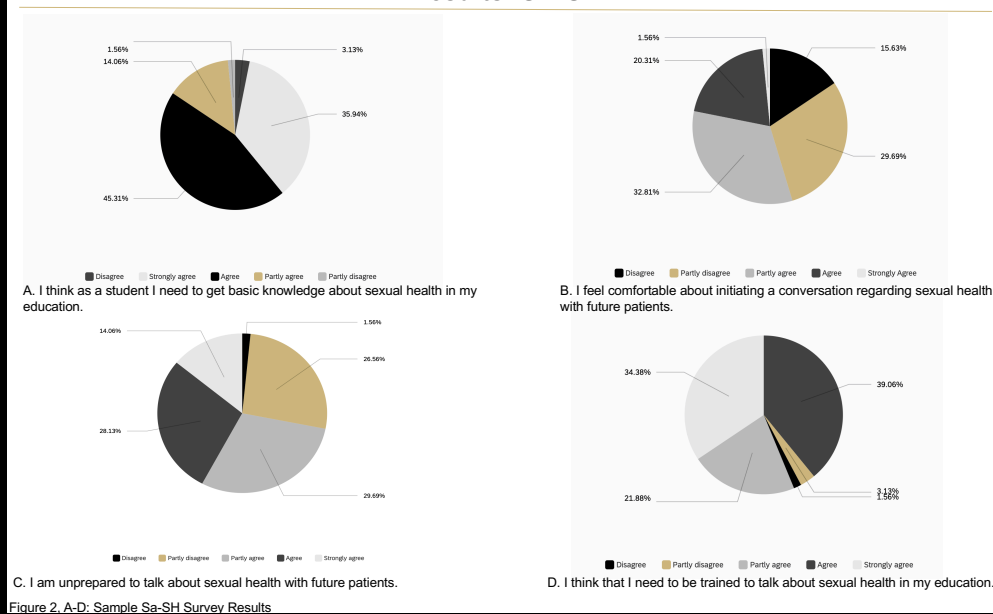
Year 2: Evidence based skills for communication



Year 3: Case based clinical decision making

Figure 1: Longitudinal Curriculum

Results: SA-SH



Results

- 63/65 students completed the questionnaire (97% response rate).
- Survey**
 - Students feel the topic of sexual health is important to address with patients, yet they feel underprepared to do so.
 - Students concerned about interpersonal dynamics including factors of gender, age, and culture as barriers to confidently address sexual health with patients.
- Curriculum**
 - Positive response to the longitudinal curriculum and report high satisfaction with the courses in which these topics are placed.
 - High value in having this training as part of curriculum and value application it to clinical experiences.

Discussion

- Relevance**
 - 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.
- Limitations**
 - Taboo nature may influence reporting.
- Future Directions**
 - 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.

References

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