

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH—EDUCATION

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### Oxford School of Sexual Medicine: How Are We Doing?

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#### ABSTRACT

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**Introduction.** Since 2007, the European Society of Sexual Medicine has held an annual 2-week educational residential program at Oxford. The Oxford School of Sexual Medicine provides knowledge and skills learning opportunities for healthcare professionals.

**Aim.** The aim of the current study was to evaluate the impact of Oxford School courses on the daily practice and medical careers of fellows from different countries.

**Methods.** All participants in the Oxford School programs were invited to anonymously complete a self-administered questionnaire.

**Main Outcome Measures.** The questionnaire comprised three sections: socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents; four Likert-scale score items inquiring about professional background; and 17 closed and two open questions to evaluate the impact of Oxford School on the respondents' practices. Differences in proportions of categorical variables between respondent subgroups were assessed using Pearson  $\chi^2$  test.

**Results.** The mean age of the 54 fellows who participated in the study was 44 years (range 28–63 years), 71% were men and 29% were women. Fifty (92%) were physicians, two (4%) psychologists, and two (4%) were sex therapists. Following participation in the Oxford School course, significantly more participants reported spending 50% or more of their clinical time practicing sexual medicine than prior to the course (59% [32] vs. 27% [15],  $P < 0.001$ , Figure 1); and significantly more reported spending 50% or more of their working time in clinical research (54% [29] vs. 33% [18],  $P < 0.001$ , Figure 2). Forty-six fellows (85%) reported current participation in teaching activities, compared with only 29 (54%) prior to participating in the Oxford School course.

**Conclusion.** Educational activities in sexual medicine, such as the Oxford School, may contribute to the advancement of clinical practice, teaching activities, and clinical research of healthcare providers who are interested in sexual medicine. **Lowenstein L, Reisman Y, Tripodi F, Dean J, Shechter A, and Porst H. Oxford School of Sexual Medicine: How are we doing? J Sex Med 2015;12:59–65.**

**Key Words.** Education; Sexual Medicine; Survey; Training Program

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#### Introduction

Sexual dysfunctions are highly prevalent [1–4]. A cross-sectional study of attendees to 13 general practitioner offices in London reported at least one International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems diagnosis of sexual dysfunction

among 40% of the women and among 22% of the men. Although some women talk about their sexual dysfunction with their doctors [5], apparently many do not [6]. Furthermore, a survey of 11,161 young people in Britain reported that more prefer to receive information about sexual matters from healthcare professionals than do so in practice [7].

Although research in the field of sexual medicine has progressed exponentially, in clinical practice we seem to be lagging behind. A knowledge gap exists between developments in sexual medicine and the clinical skills of practicing physicians. The European Society of Sexual Medicine (ESSM) confronts the challenge of training physicians and healthcare providers who deliver sexual health care. The ESSM offers courses that introduce a collaborative training model aimed to promote ease with the subject among healthcare professional, as well as instill skills in providing optimal care to patients with sexual health concerns and dysfunctions. The ESSM initiated its first 2-week residential program at Oxford in 2007. Offered annually, the course has trained 155 psychologists, social workers, and physicians from Europe, Asia, Australia, and America. The course comprises 75 hours with experts and with simulated patients for practical training in sexual medicine. The program consisted of practicing clinical cases with simulated patients, oral presentations, and discussions in small groups on problems and defined cases (<http://www.essm.org/society/mjcsml/the-essm-school-of-sexual-medicine/program-of-the-essm-school-of-sexual-medicine.html>). Based on the understanding that centers of excellence in sexual medicine need be implemented by multidisciplinary teams for diagnosis and treatment of sexual dysfunction in men and women [8], the Oxford School of Sexual Medicine initiated a learning opportunity for healthcare professionals of different backgrounds: specialists, psychologists, physiotherapists, and social workers in the field of sexual medicine and sex therapy.

### Aim

This article aims to evaluate the impact of participation in the Oxford School course on the daily practice and healthcare career of attendees. Based on the findings, we plan to develop the course to meet the expectations and learning needs of participants.

### Methods

Participants in the Oxford School course, from its establishment in 2007 and until 2012, were invited to anonymously complete a self-administered questionnaire comprised of 25 closed questions and two open questions (Appendix 1).

Participants received an email with an invitation to participate in an online, self-administered

survey. The stated purpose of the survey was to evaluate the impact of the course on participants' daily practice and career and to apply the information gained to improve future courses and other educational programs in the framework of sexual medicine.

### Main Outcome Measures

The survey consisted of three sections: the first assessed socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents; the second consisted of four Likert-scale score items inquiring about professional background; and the third consisted of 17 closed questions and two open items to evaluate the impact of the Oxford School course on the participants' daily practice (Appendix 1).

### Statistical Analyses

Differences in proportions between categorical variables were assessed using the Pearson  $\chi^2$  test. All statistical tests were performed using SPSS v.19 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). All tests were two sided, with the significance level set at 0.05.

### Results

Overall, 155 healthcare professionals have attended the Oxford School since 2007. Of them, 54 (35%) participated in the study. The mean age was 44 years (range 28–63 years), 71% were men and 29% were women. The vast majority of participants were physicians (50, 92%), two (4%) were psychologists, and two (4%) were sex therapists. The most common primary medical specialism was urology with 19 (38%), 10 (20%) were gynecologists, eight (16%) were family physicians, eight (16%) were psychiatrists, and five (10%) were endocrinologists. The origins of the participants were countries throughout Europe, Saudi Arabia, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Lebanon, Uruguay, and Israel. Of the respondents, 25 (46%) had practiced sexual medicine for 5–10 years, 10 (19%) for less than 5 years and 19 (35%) for more than 10 years.

Prior to participating in the Oxford School, 30 (55%) participants spent only 25% or less of their working time practicing sexual medicine; following participation in the course, significantly more participants spent 50% or more of their clinical time practicing sexual medicine following the course than prior to the course, 32 (59%) vs. 15 (27%),  $P < 0.001$ , with only 16 (30%) spending

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