

SEXUAL MEDICINE REVIEWS

Sexual Activity After 60: A Systematic Review of Associated Factors

Suzanne Bell, PhD Candidate, Elke D. Reissing, PhD, Lisa A. Henry, MA, and Heather VanZuylem, BA

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sexuality and the desire for affection and intimacy are important human features across the lifespan.

Aims: To evaluate and synthesize the existing literature on factors associated with continued sexual activity in adults at least 60 years of age.

Methods: Three databases were used to select articles, 57 of which met the selection criteria. Methodologic quality was assessed and data were extracted from these studies by two independent reviewers according to standards proposed by the Cochrane Collaboration.

Main Outcome Measures: Studies were evaluated for quality, included sexual activities, and identified associated factors.

Results: Sexual activity was positively associated with past frequency of sexual behavior and partner's interest in sexual activity. Decreased sexual activity (and/or cessation) was associated with the presence of erectile dysfunction and partner's illness. Noteworthy were significant inconsistencies of findings across studies and contrasting findings of generally assumed factors associated with sexual activity in later years (eg, physical and mental health). However, increasing methodologic quality was observed in studies that were more recent. Probable reasons for disparate findings are discussed and recommendations for methodologic improvements are outlined, focusing on population diversity, construct definitions, measurement, and sampling techniques.

Conclusion: The literature on sexual activity in older adults is vastly heterogeneous with methodologic caveats and inconsistent results evidenced across studies. Vigilant attention to methodology is essential because sexual activity in later life is multidetermined with amplified individual variability in older vs younger cohorts.

Sex Med Rev 2016;■:1–29. Copyright © 2016, International Society for Sexual Medicine. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Key Words: Sexual Function; Sexuality; Systematic Review; Aging; Seniors; Elderly

INTRODUCTION

The topic of sexuality in older adults has received increased attention in the popular media^{1,2} and the research literature.³ Acceptance of older adults as sexual persons has shifted the focus from dysfunction to a more comprehensive understanding of sexuality and the ability to experience sexual fulfillment while managing potential barriers imposed by aging.⁴ As an example, the introduction of erection-facilitating medications such as Viagra has contributed to the substantive expansion of sexual medicine and has initiated a previously non-existent public discourse on sexual function in middle and later adulthood in men—and perhaps the same can be expected for women with the recent Food and Drug Administration approval for Addyi to treat low sexual desire in women. Although older adults currently have

more options regarding sexual activity as the result of more approving public opinions, the understanding of what factors are associated with sexual activity in older adults is still limited. This systematic review was conducted to evaluate and summarize the research literature on variables associated with sexual activity in adults at least 60 years of age.

Research on sexuality and aging is diverse. On one end of the spectrum, studies have investigated physiologic function with a direct or implied focus on the treatment of sexual problems^{5–9}; on the other end, researchers have focused on the qualitative presentation of the considerable range in which sexual activity is expressed by older adults.^{10–12} Much information can be gleaned from the existing research; however, some studies have presented significant methodologic shortcomings that preclude conclusions. Nevertheless, the authors expected that an investigation of common themes of the more rigorous studies would assist in the formation of general conclusions with the potential of guiding future research. To identify these studies, a systematic review of the literature was conducted. A systematic review was chosen over a meta-analysis because of the heterogeneity of

Received December 8, 2015. Accepted March 5, 2016.

University of Ottawa, School of Psychology, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Copyright © 2016, International Society for Sexual Medicine. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sxmr.2016.03.001>

methodologies used in the studies reviewed and to include an analysis of the qualitative literature.

The protocols for this systematic review were adapted from the standards proposed by the Cochrane Collaboration¹³ and guidelines suggested by Wright et al.¹⁴ This systematic review used a transparent and rigorous approach to provide critical analysis of studies that addressed the research question, “What factors are associated with sexual activity in adults at least 60 years of age?” In this article, the authors review search and selection criteria as well as the quality assessment of selected studies, present an overview of the areas of focus in these studies, report a synthesis of studies’ general research findings, highlight methodologic strengths and challenges, and conclude by directly addressing the research question using the highest quality studies. Sexual activity in the context of this systematic review was defined as caressing, foreplay, solitary or mutual masturbation, oral-genital sexual activities, and anal or vaginal intercourse.

METHODS

Search Strategy

Publications were retrieved by an initial computerized search of PsycINFO (1806–2011), Web of Science (1898–2011), and AARP Ageline (1978–2011) using the following search string: (sexual* or intercourse or masturbation) and (activity or behaviour or behavior or function or expression or habit* or regular* or frequency or routine*) and (elderly or old age or older adult or senior or aging or geriatric or gerontology) not (adolescent or child* or teen). In 2016, this search was updated. The two searches returned a combined total of 5,652 results. RefWorks, a Web-based bibliography and database manager, was used to manage the search content.

Selection Criteria

To decrease the number of studies included in this systematic review, specific inclusion criteria were used. Studies were included if the following conditions were met: (i) the article was a full report, published in English, in a peer-reviewed journal; (ii) information was presented on physical, psychological, social, and/or demographic factors relating to sexual activity in older adults; and (iii) participants were at least 60 years of age. Studies also were included if they incorporated a broader age sampling, so long as adults at least 60 years were old were differentiated in the analyses.

Consistent with the protocols for systematic reviews proposed by the Cochrane Collaboration¹³ and the guidelines suggested by Wright et al,¹⁴ two reviewers were chosen to minimize bias in the selection of articles for the review. Reviewers were the first author (S.B.), a PhD candidate in clinical psychology, and the third author (L.H.), a registered sex therapist. During the initial selection process, duplicate articles were removed and the remaining articles were screened by each reviewer using the selection criteria by title, then by abstract, and then by full

article. Articles were excluded at each level of analysis only if they failed to meet at least one of the inclusion criteria (eg, if the title indicated a study on the sexual behaviors of animals, then it was excluded). If the available information was ambiguous in any respect, the article was retained. A second verification of inclusion criteria of selected articles was conducted by S.B. and inconsistencies were identified and resolved during consensus meetings. Each reviewer presented the rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of the article and corroborating evidence was collaboratively searched in the article or title and abstract depending on the stage of exclusion. During the updated selection process, articles were screened by the first author (S.B.) by title, then by abstract, and then by full article in consultation with the fourth author (H.V., a PhD candidate in experimental psychology focusing on sexuality and aging).

Quality Assessment

After extraction of the research articles directly pertinent to the research question, the second phase of the systematic review involved the assessment of the methodologic quality of the studies. The first and fourth authors reviewed the articles using the standard quality assessment criteria of Kmet et al¹⁵ for evaluating primary research articles from different fields to evaluate qualitative and quantitative studies included in this review. Quantitative studies were rated on the research question, study design, participant selection, sample description, random assignment, investigator blinding, participant blinding, outcome measurements, sample size, analytic methods, estimate of variance, confound control, results, and conclusions.¹⁵ Qualitative studies were rated on the research question, study design, context, theoretical framework, participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis, verification procedures, conclusions, and reflexivity. Quantitative and qualitative studies were given a score of 0, 1, or 2 for each quality criterion. The quality assessment forms were reviewed by S.B. and disagreements between reviewers on individual items were identified and then solved during scheduled, face-to-face consensus meetings that were conducted identically to the first-stage consensus meetings. Subsequently, quality scores were computed for each article by summing the codes for each item of the quality assessment criteria and dividing this score by the number of applicable items. Then, the studies were ranked according to their total quality score (as a percentage of the maximum attainable score). Studies that incorporated quantitative and qualitative data were evaluated using the two sets of quality assessment criteria and ranked accordingly.

Data Extraction

Data were collected from each study that met the inclusion criteria using a predefined data extraction form implemented by two reviewers (S.B. and H.V.). This form was piloted on a subsample of five studies by the first author. The data extracted included sampling procedure, study setting, sample size,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8829459>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8829459>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)