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## Original Article

# Oncology ostomized patients' perception regarding sexual relationship as an important dimension in quality of life

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** For ostomized oncological patients, the physical body alterations affects the quality of life, as the changes in the self-concept are factors that directly affect the sexual life.

**Objective:** To analyze the perceptions of ostomized men due to intestinal cancer regarding sexual relations as an important dimension of quality of life, treated at the Ambulatory Care Program for Ostomized Patients of the Health Secretariat of the Federal District, Brazil.

**Methods:** Epidemiological-based study, of the analytical type, with a cross-sectional descriptive design, with quantitative and qualitative approach considering the content analysis. The convenience sample included 56 participants. Sociodemographic, clinical, and the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaires were used, as well as an individual interview. Data were analyzed by Microsoft Office Excel 2010 and SPSS 20.0 software. Statistical significance was set at 5%.

**Results:** The Physical, Social Relations and Environment Domains are correlated with the mean score, statistical significance ( $p < 0.0001$ ), and the content analysis resulted in five categories: Ostomy, Self-Care, Acceptance, Self-concept, and Companionship.

**Conclusion:** Sexuality should be considered as a process of daily living of ostomized individuals due to intestinal cancer.

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## Um olhar dos homens estomizados intestinais oncológicos sobre a relação sexual como dimensão importante na qualidade de vida

R E S U M O

### Palavras-chave:

Qualidade de vida

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Sexualidade

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**Introdução:** Para a pessoa estomizada intestinal oncológica o significado da alteração no corpo físico afeta a qualidade de vida, pois encontra-se com as alterações no autoconceito são fatores que dificultam diretamente o relacionamento sexual.

**Objetivo:** Analisar as percepções dos homens estomizados intestinais oncológicos quanto ao relacionamento sexual como dimensão importante na qualidade de vida, atendidos pelo Programa de Assistência Ambulatorial ao Estomizado da Secretaria de Saúde do Distrito Federal, Brasil.

**Métodos:** Estudo de base epidemiológica, de caráter analítico, com delineamento transversal e descritivo, com abordagem quantitativa e qualitativa à luz da análise de conteúdo. A amostra foi constituída por conveniência, incluídos 56 participantes. Utilizou-se os questionários sócio-demográfico, clínico, e o WHOQOL-bref e uma entrevista individual. Os dados foram analisados pelos programas Microsoft® Office Excel 2010 e SPSS 20.0. A significância estatística aceita foi de 5%.

**Resultados:** Os Domínios Físico, Relações Sociais e Meio Ambiente estão correlacionadas com o escore médio, significância estatística ( $p < 0,0001$ ), a análise de conteúdo resultou em cinco categorias: Estomia, Autocuidado, Aceitação, Autoconceito e Companheirismo.

**Conclusão:** A sexualidade deve ser considerada como processo do viver cotidiano do estomizado intestinal oncológico.

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## Introduction

The World Health Organization defines quality of life as “the individuals perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value system in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”.<sup>1</sup> Based on this aspect, quality of life is a broad and comprehensive concept, affected in a complex way by the health of the physical person, that is, it is multidimensional, dynamic, subjective, individual, complex and seeks to interconnect the physical, social, spiritual and environmental aspects.<sup>2,3</sup> Furthermore, from a subjective perspective, the assessment of quality of life depends directly on the evaluation of the individuals. In the multidimensional domain, it is important to evaluate their physical well-being, their functional capacity, their psychological and social health.<sup>2,3</sup> Therefore, and considering the quality of life as one of the dimensions of human life, its evaluation becomes very important, particularly regarding the sexuality of the oncological ostomized male patients.

However, sexuality can be understood as a fundamental aspect of life and is present since until death, having specific characteristics in each period of the life cycle. Sexuality is, therefore, the set of emotions, feelings, fantasies, desires, and interpretations that the human being experiences throughout life.<sup>4</sup>

Simultaneously, sexuality constitutes an integral part of the human personality, associating personal and emotional experiences, sociocultural knowledge, beliefs, and values built throughout history and, thus, the sexual life cannot be separated from the social, historical, anthropological and psychological themes.<sup>4</sup>

In this sense, for the oncological ostomized individual, the meaning of the alterations in the physical body and the suffering caused by the new lifestyle affects the quality of life, due to the changes in body image, the low self-esteem, with feelings of rejection and changes in daily activities, which are factors that directly affect the sexual life.<sup>3,5</sup>

Based on this conception, the objective of this study was to analyze the perceptions of oncological ostomized male individuals regarding sexual relations as an important dimension of quality of life, treated at the Ambulatory Care Program for Ostomized Patients of the Health Secretariat of the Federal District, Brazil.

## Material and methods

### Study methodology

This is epidemiological-based study, of the analytical type, with a cross-sectional descriptive design, with quantitative and qualitative approach considering the content analysis. Participants included in the study belonged to a group of ostomized individuals due to colorectal cancer. The observation and measurement of the variables of interest were performed simultaneously, constituting a statistical image of what occurs at a given moment.

The data collection of the interview was analyzed considering the Bardin Content Analysis, which is based on the phase of description or material preparation, inference or deduction and interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

The study protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Fundação de Ensino e Pesquisa em Ciências da

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