

Attitudes and Beliefs of Nurses in addressing Sexuality in Chronic Rheumatic Diseases

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INTRODUCTION

Rheumatic diseases are chronic, inflammatory and progressive in nature, with huge impact on quality of life and social and psychological consequences. Research has established that the symptoms of rheumatic diseases can negatively affect patient’s sexuality. Nursing is faced with increasing challenges to address the area of sexuality as part of holistic and person centred care.

AIM

To ascertain nurses` perceptions of the importance of this issue and to identify the barriers, if any, that nurses perceive impact their practice.

METHOD

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design, with a quantitative methodology. Purposive sample of 75 Irish Rheumatology nurses, with a response rate of n=44, using a Sexual Attitudes and Beliefs Survey (SABS) questionnaire. Demographic data along with investigator-developed 3 open-ended questions were included.

RESULTS

Nurses’ perception that patients do not expect nurses to discuss sexual concerns was the greatest barrier to incorporate sexuality into nursing practice. Nurses who addressed sexuality, focused on contraception, family planning and pregnancy. 66% of nurses also indicated that sexuality should be discussed even if not initiated by the patient. 79% indicated that discussing sexuality is essential to patient’s health outcomes.

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RESULTS



CONCLUSION

There were several key barriers identified by nurses, including limited skills, lack of knowledge, time, privacy, confidence, lack of assessment tools and referral pathways, lack of resources, difficulty in initiating the conversation, lack of guidelines and guidance on appropriate sexual health literature.

Summary: A meaningful sex life can facilitate adaptation to chronic illness for both patient and partner. In patients with rheumatic diseases, satisfaction with the sex life has been reported to be an important predictor of global life satisfaction. Patients' sexuality is still besieged by silence. Nurses have a vital role in identifying ill-health & sexual problems.

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