

Sexuality Issues

- Sexuality is an integral part of normal life and important to quality of life. Sexuality is multifaceted and encompasses sex, gender, identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction
- Sexual dysfunction can occur in 20%-100% of cancer patients. Long-term sexual dysfunction has been documented in at least 50% of CRC patients. Fewer than 20% of men and women seek medical help
- Diagnosis of CRC often involves a colostomy or ileostomy and/or chemotherapy or radiation therapy that increases potential for disruption in sexuality This line is Arial Regular 28 pt

Wagner et al. *J Sex Med.* 2005;2:163-168.

Vogel. In: *Oncology Nursing Advisor: A Comprehensive Guide to Clinical Practice.* Mosby; 2008:340-343.

Oncology Nursing Society. Site-specific physiologic and body image alterations

Sexuality Issues: Effect of Cancer Treatments

- Chemotherapy—depends on the agent used
 - Alkylating agents, antimetabolites, and antitumor antibiotics can cause amenorrhea, oligospermia, azoospermia, decreased libido, ovarian dysfunction, and erectile dysfunction
 - Alkylating agents may cause primary ovarian failure in females and sexual dysfunction and infertility in men
- Targeted therapies—little information
 - Most effects may be related to fatigue (decreased libido), dry mucous membranes (dyspareunia), dermatologic toxicities (body image), or secondary hypertension requiring medical management (erectile dysfunction)

Piétrangeli et al. *Clin Auton Res.* 1998;8:353-357.
Hendren et al. *Ann Surg.* 2005;242:212-223.

Sexuality Issues: Effect of Cancer Treatments

- Surgery
 - Portions of the colon and/or rectum may be removed. Colostomy or ileostomy impact sexual function, desire, and body image
 - Some surgeries for CRC may lead to temporary or permanent sexual dysfunction
- Radiation therapy
 - Males: impotence, urinary, and bowel issues
 - Females: vaginal atrophy or stenosis and irritation

Sexuality Issues: Assessment

- Models for assessment and counseling
 - PLISSIT
 - BETTER
 - ALARM
- Key points to consider when addressing issue of sexuality
 - Approach topic proactively
 - Open discussion prior to treatment decisions
 - Consider fertility preservation for those in childbearing years
 - Written information is best for the patient and partner
 - Appropriate referral is needed if the nurse is unable to provide required information or treatment

Katz. *Breaking the Silence on Cancer and Sexuality: A Handbook for Healthcare Providers. Oncology Nursing Society; 2007:19-29.*

Annon. In: *The Behavioral Treatment of Sexual Problems: Brief Therapy.* Harper and Row; 1976:43-47.

Mick et al. *Clin J Oncol Nurs.* 2004;8:84-86.

Sexuality Issues: Nursing Interventions

- Lack of interest or decreased libido
 - Counsel patient or couple together, encouraging expression of feelings and emotions
- Erectile dysfunction
 - Gradual trial with phosphodiesterase-5 inhibitors (sildenafil, tadalafil, or vardenafil)
- Female painful intercourse
 - Try alternative positions for penetrative intercourse
 - Vaginal dilatation
- Aesthetic challenges with ostomy
 - Women may wear crotchless underwear to conceal stoma
 - Men may find wearing boxer shorts stabilizes the appliance