

Sexuality and Illness – A guidebook for Health Professionals

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This book provides information and guidance for health professionals on how disease and disability impacts on sexual health and wellbeing across the lifespan from adolescence to older age. Further, the book describes how sexuality is an important aspect of being human and how it is affected by sexual aging, including the physical and cognitive challenges associated with illness, disease and disability.

There are 14 chapters in the book. The content is diverse and is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of human sexuality and how sex works, including the human sexual response cycle and sexual dysfunction. The importance of communication about sexuality and sexual function between patients and health professionals is discussed.

The second section provides the latest evidence on the role of many different medical conditions and diseases such as trauma, mental illness, cancer, disability and infertility and their potential relationship to sexuality and sexual function.

The third section provides illustrative case studies and includes evidenced-based assessment tools. Recommendations for interventions and treatments to guide management of sexual dysfunction are provided for adolescents, men and women, taking race and ethnic diversity, gender and sexual preferences into consideration. The factors addressed are relevant to all members of an interdisciplinary team.

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On reflection, and for any future iterations of the book, I hope that the author would consider including dementia as a disability and how dementia impacts relationships. The psychosocial spiritual and emotional need for intimacy or sex in later life for older adults may change. Both physical ailments and cognitive disabilities, such as a type of dementia or from the loss of their partners through death or separation, impacts the quality of life for older people. As people live longer there will be times when new relationships may be formed among those in their seventies up to mid-nineties. Current residential aged care facilities are often not welcoming to any sexual expression, even within marriage. The environmental design in aged care has an influence on privacy and together the care givers attitude may include stereotyping older adult's sexual expression and intimacy.

Sexuality and relationships are a vitally important aspect of human need. Illness and disability have the potential to disrupt the norm for an individual or a couple. The factors addressed in this book are relevant to all members of an interdisciplinary team. In addition, this book would be a useful addition to schools of nursing and medical curricula to guide discussion, accrue knowledge and be able to implement information on sexuality and sexual dysfunction into clinical practice