

A survey of penetrative and non-penetrative sexual pain experiences in women with pelvic pain.

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Aim: In the medical literature, women's sexual pain is almost universally defined as a problem that interferes with penetrative sex. Little attention is given to sexual and pelvic pain that interferes with arousal/orgasm. We aimed to assess penetrative and non-penetrative sexual pain experience and to investigate women's perspectives of the assessment and treatment of their sexual pain.

Method: We used a voluntary response sampling method, with advertisements placed on pelvic pain support group websites and Facebook pages. We recruited 295 participants with experiences of pelvic pain and sexual pain (\geq 6-months duration). Attempts were made to recruit women with diverse sexualities and relationship status.

Results: Frequent pain with penetrative sex was almost universally reported. Approximately one-third of participants reported never experiencing pain with non-penetrative sex, arousal, and orgasm. Qualitative results indicated that sexual pain was seen as important by a participant's clinician when it interfered with fertility.

Conclusion: Framing of female sexual pain as relevant to the degree that it interferes with reproductive capacity has two potential implications: 1) Women's sexual pain experiences outside of penetrative sex are overlooked; and 2) Opportunities to promote sexual pleasure outside of penetrative sex activities are ignored.

Accompanying Information:

1) Preferred presentation format: Oral

I AM prepared to have my abstract considered for a poster presentation if it is not accepted for oral presentation.

2) The stream you wish to be considered for: Epidemiology and behavioural research

3) A short biography of the presenting author:

Dr Charlene Rapsey is a lecturer at the University of Otago. She teaches sexual medicine and sexual health from a biopsychosocial perspective.

4) I would like the presentation to be considered for the: Oliver Davidson Prize.