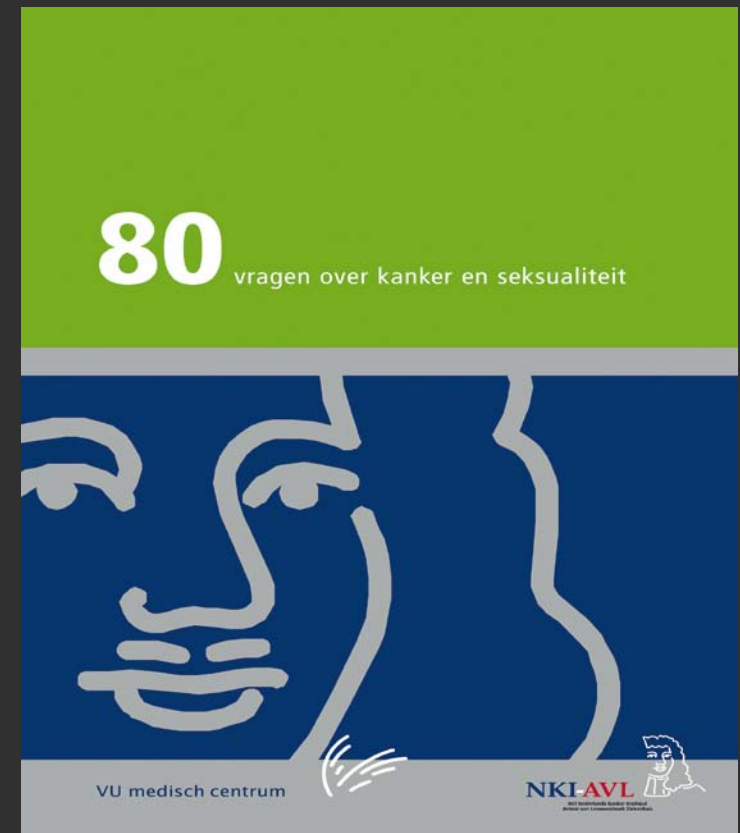


80 questions and answers about Cancer and Sexuality

Corien Eeltink, RN
MA Advanced Nursing Practice

Daniela Hahn
Psychologist-sexuologist



Sexual dysfunction is a frequent long-term side effect of cancer treatment



Cancer patients report that they seldom remember discussing sexual risks before treatment or treatment options for sexual dysfunction after treatment

(Park, 2009)

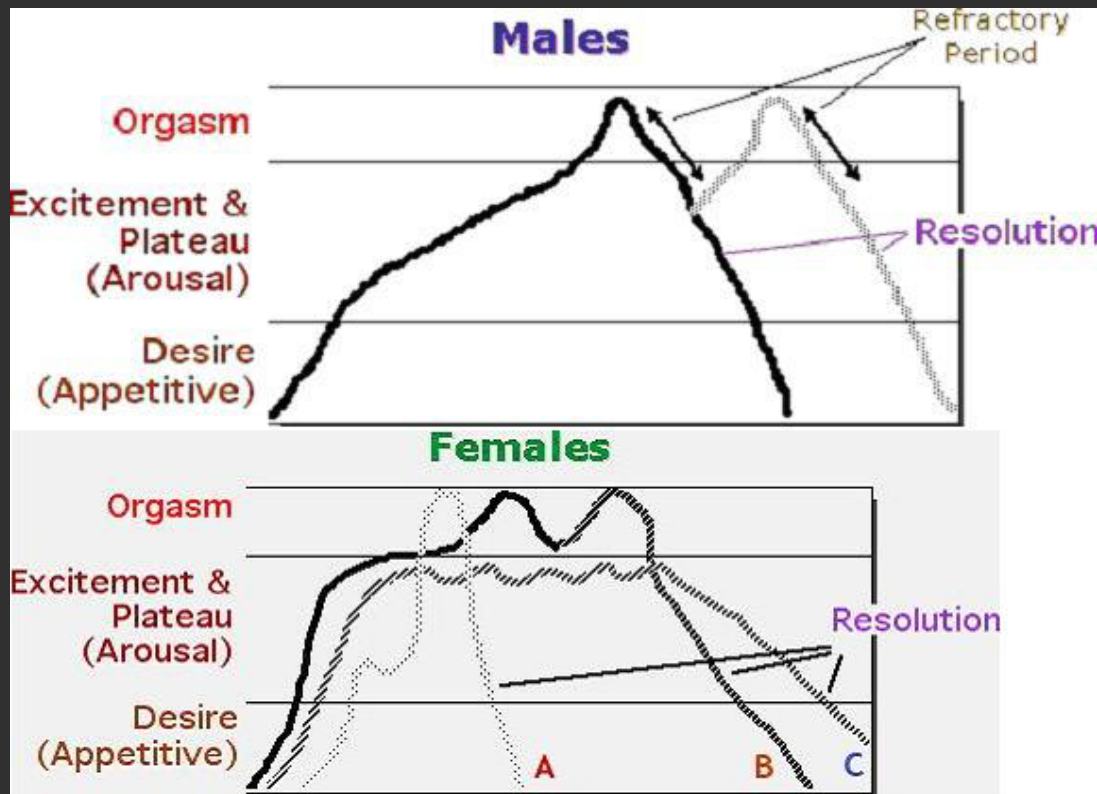


Three problems

- Nurses often state that they lack knowledge and insight in sexuality and changes in sexuality and therefore find it difficult to address this subject with patients
- Research has shown that many patients will only talk about sexuality if the healthcare professional addresses the topic (Gamel, 1993)
- Presumption that once a person is faced with a life-threatening disease, they will lose interest in their sexuality and focus solely on fighting the disease (Hordern, 2007)



Sexuality



Sexuality and cancer

- 1 the cancer
- 2 the psychological distress
- 3 the treatment of cancer
- 4 side effects
- 5 alterations in relationship with intimate partner



At which point in time should sexuality be discussed with patients with cancer?

(Hughes, 2000)

(Wilmoth & Spinelli, 2000)

(Paice, 2003)



Sexual health communication during cancer care

- Cancer patients report that they seldom remember discussing sexual risks before treatment or treatment options for sexual dysfunction after treatment
- Oncology physicians and nurses acknowledge that conversations about sexual health usually do not occur during the course of cancer treatment
- Medical professionals' beliefs about what should be done often contrast with what they are doing



What do patients want?

- an open and frank communication about sexual issues (impact on sexual relationship) with medical professionals
- basic information about their sexual functioning and reassurance that their sexual health issues are not unique
- information about female anatomy and physiology as well as information about the long-term physical and emotional effects of treatment that affected their sexual functioning
- reassurance about safety of sexual activity

Park, 2009



Barriers to sexual health communication

- survivors do not feel that they were prepared to cope with sexual changes
- who should be initiating these conversations
- unsure about what to say
- patients do not know if it is appropriate to bring up sexual concerns

Park, 2009



Patients' perspectives

- initiation by physician
- knowledge at diagnosis
- beliefs about cancer and sexuality



Medical professionals' perspectives

- patient characteristics
- provider characteristics
- systems issues.



Recommendations

- patient education as soon as possible



Factors that influence nursing care behavior

(sexuality) knowledge and skills
attitude towards sexuality
opinion about professional role and tasks
comfort with sexuality
participation in continuing education activities

Gamel, 1993



Factors that influence nursing care behavior

- incorrect assumptions toward sexual issues
- comfort
- sexual knowledge
- professional nursing role
- patient- and nurse-related issues
- work environment-related issues
- continuing education activities
- society-related factors

Kotronoulas, 2009



Lack of knowledge

- Sexual problems
- Adequate treatment options



80

vragen over kanker en seksualiteit



Timing and type of sexuality information (Zegwaard,2000)

Time period	Type of information
Diagnosis and Treatment	<p>What effects do symptoms of the disease have on sexuality?</p> <p>What (negative) effects on sexuality are associated with the various treatments?</p>
Early Recovery /Discharge	<p>What sexual activities are restricted and for how long?</p> <p>What sexual activities are not restricted?</p> <p>How can physical complications influence sexual activities?</p> <p>How can changes and complications be managed?</p>
Rebuilding sexual life	<p>What potential problems ofte occur six or more months after treatment and how can these problems be managed?</p> <p>What experiences and advice are offered by other patients?</p>



Content

- **Breast cancer**
- **Urogenital malignancies**
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- **Lung cancer**
- **Medical treatment**
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- **Interventions**



- C.Eeltink@VUmc.nl
- D.Hahn@nki.nl

