

Women's Expectations of Physicians in Sexual Health Concerns

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ABSTRACT: This study surveyed 56 women to assess their expectations for the primary care physician to inquire about sexual concerns and to diagnose and treat sexual problems. The study indicates that the physician is the professional most frequently consulted about sexual concerns and that patients expect even more leadership from the physician in raising the issue of sexual health. Women look for empathy, warmth, confidentiality, and professional competence in discussions with their doctor about sexual matters; and they are open to referrals for treatment of sexual problems and physician-sponsored sex education programs.

KEY WORDS: Female Sexuality, Sexual Health, Patient Expectations, Doctor-Patient Relationship, Physician's Role, Sex Abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Women have long expressed concern to their physicians about sexuality matters. But little inquiry has been made into the sexual health attitudes of female patients and the expectations they have for physician assistance with sexuality problems. Empirical studies have tended, instead, to focus on physicians' attitudes and skills in addressing these problems, often concluding that physicians' abilities to identify and manage sexual problems are insufficient. Because it is a common assumption among some physicians that sexual concerns will be raised by the patient—and a common assumption among some

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