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Manual on Sexual and Reproductive Health

An Awakening

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Contents

1. **Sexual Response Cycle** 1
   Sini S Venugopal
2. **Understanding Female Sexual Dysfunction: Concept and Classification** 9
   Yogita Gautam
3. **Female Sexual Interest and Arousal Disorders** 16
   Dilpreet Sandhu
4. **Female Orgasmic Disorder** 25
   Reshma Mirge
5. **Vaginismus: An Underrated Yet Important Intimate Issue** 38
   Indu Singh
6. **Menopause and Sexuality** 46
   Swapnita Hota
7. **Sex in Pregnancy** 52
   Vani Puri
8. **Media Influence on Sexual Health** 57
   Tripti Sharan
9. **Erectile Dysfunction** 61
   Aatmik Jain
10. **Premature Ejaculation** 68
    Percy B Kharas
11. **Sexual History Taking: A Comprehensive Guidelines** 72
    Vaidehi Thakur, Deep Kamal
12. **Sexuality and Gen Z: The Paradigmatic Shift in Modern Human Connection—A Sexual Medicine Perspective** 80
    Naisargi Patel
13. **Age of Consent, Sex, and Where India Stands** 85
    Parul Saoji
14. **Sensate Focus Therapy** 92
    Sujoy Dasgupta

15. Cognitive Behavioral Sex Therapy.....98
Vandana Rani Bhuriya

16. Sexual and Reproductive Rights.....104
Madhu Kiran

17. Mindfulness-based Therapy for Management of Female Sexual Dysfunction 111
Shama Sultana

8 CHAPTER

Media Influence on Sexual Health

Tripti Sharan

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HEALTH

- Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or dysfunction.
- It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and relationships.
- Every individual should be able to experience pleasurable and safe sexual experiences free from coercion and violence.

MEDIA AND SEXUAL HEALTH

- Media is a central influence shaping society's view of sexuality.
- Youth spend around 6–7 hours daily on TV, OTT, music and social media.
- The mix of entertainment and education often blurs the boundary between knowledge and misinformation.
- Unfiltered exposure affects attitudes toward gender, relationships and sexual behavior.

SEXUAL CONTENT IN MEDIA

- Nearly two-thirds of TV/OTT shows contain sexual content.
- Around 20–50% of music videos show sexual imagery.
- For every 25 scenes of sexual behavior, only one shows protective practice like contraception or consent.
- Lack of realistic outcomes (such as STIs, pregnancy, emotional impact) creates false perceptions especially amongst adolescents.
- Leads to normalization of risky sexual behavior among viewers.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Adolescents report media as their main source of sexual information, while only ≈11% learn from parents.
- Girls are exposed to relationship-based themes; boys to dominance and fantasy-driven content.
- Cultural and religious contexts shape how messages are interpreted.
- Influences attitudes on gender roles and intimacy.

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INTERPRETATION AND BEHAVIOR

- Media messages are interpreted differently by age, gender and culture.
- *Frequent exposure is linked with:*
  - Early sexual initiation
  - Risk-taking behavior and normalization of risky behavior
  - Poor understanding of consent and boundaries
  - Body objectification and unrealistic expectations
- Repeated exposure desensitizes youth to intimacy and real emotional connections.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL EFFECTS

- Excess sexualized content can cause anxiety, body image issues and low self-esteem.
- Problematic porn use linked to erectile dysfunction and low satisfaction.
- Sexting and cyberbullying exposes youth to emotional trauma and legal complications.
- Creates distorted notions of love and relationships.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND GROOMING

- CSA involves using a child in sexual activity that they cannot understand or consent to.
- Sexual grooming is a gradual process involving trust-building before exploitation.
- *Common stages include:*
  1. Targeting the child
  2. Gaining trust
  3. Meeting emotional needs
  4. Isolating the child
  5. Sexualizing the relationship
  6. Maintaining control
- Occurs online or offline, across all genders and ages.

POSITIVE IMPACT OF MEDIA

- When used responsibly, media can promote sexual health awareness and inclusivity.
- Provides access to accurate information on STIs, contraception and consent.
- Breaks social taboos and normalizes open discussion.
- Encourages support for marginalized groups and reduces stigma.

ROLE OF PROFESSIONALS

- Guide adolescents to develop media literacy.

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- Encourage communication between youth and parents.
- Promote informed decision-making and realistic understanding of relationships and sexuality.
- Advocate responsible media portrayal of sexuality and consent.

WAYS TO USE MEDIA POSITIVELY

- Encourage blogging
- Use social media for live lectures
- Create interest based Facebook groups
- Use Pinterest boards
- Use You tube for presentations
- Use Twitter for concise discussion and debates
- Use social media pages to postinformation and spread awareness on relevant issues
- Be a part of Quora discussions
- Build professional connections
- Find teaching resources on social media

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

- Sexuality education extends beyond biology to include emotional intelligence, gender identity, consent, intimacy, and body image.
- It equips adolescents with scientific, age-appropriate information, empowering them to make informed choices.
- Myths such as "sex education encourages early sex" are unfounded.
- Research confirms that comprehensive sexuality education delays sexual initiation and reduces unprotected sexual activity and STIs.

RESPONSIBLE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR (ABCD MODEL)

A – Abstinence
B – Be Faithful
C – Condom/Contraceptives
D – Disease Alert and Testing

- Maintain a balance between fantasy and reality.
- Avoid addiction, ensure consent, and stay legally aware.
- Child pornography is punishable by law.

Ethical responsibility is central to healthy sexuality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Adopt a multilevel approach:*
  - *Individual:* Counselling and awareness
  - *Institutional:* Media literacy programs in schools
  - *Governmental:* Regulation, warning labels, and awareness campaigns

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- Train clinicians and educators to handle sexuality-related issues sensitively.
- Promote digital hygiene and healthy media habits.

CONCLUSION

- Media is a powerful educator and influencer.
- Its effects depend on content, audience, and interpretation.
- Through proactive education, regulation and awareness, it can become a constructive force promoting healthy sexuality, equality and safety.

KEY POINTS

- Sexual health covers physical, emotional and social well-being.
- Media strongly influences sexual perceptions and behavior.
- Overexposure may lead to risky sexual behavior and body image issues.
- Responsible media and sexuality education empower safer choices.
- Professionals should foster media literacy and awareness.
- Regulation and parental guidance are vital to balance fantasy and reality.

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