General Practitioners’ Knowledge, Perceptions and Barriers in the Management of Sexual Dysfunction

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Background

Frequently, sexual dysfunctions (SD) are considered as symptoms of pathological processes that must be correctly identified and treated if possible. A study with general practitioners (GPs) in England indicates that there is a gap between the provision and use of treatments for sexual problems. Furthermore, it is known that physicians face several barriers when it comes to following practical guidelines, such as lack of awareness, lack of familiarity and lack of agreement. This study aims to characterize: a) GPs’ knowledge about SD (diagnosis and treatment guidelines); b) Practices of SD management; c) Barriers encountered on daily practice; and d) Perceived need of training.

Materials and Methods

Cross-sectional study part of the SEXOS Study, using structured questionnaires applied to general practitioners working on Lisbon Area Health Cluster Units (ACES Odívalas Health Cluster Units (10 Health Centers)).

Study population:
1. Being a General Practitioner (intern or specialist)
2. Working in one of the selected Health Centers
3. Expressing his/her consent to participate in the study

Results

In average, the 50 participants (30 females) from 9 Primary Health Centers are 52±6.6 years old, have 21±8.2 years of family practice and follow 1613±364 patients (Table 1).

The average of patients that GPs actively ask about sexual problems is 16±16.7 compared to 14±13.2 of patients who take the initiative (Table 2).

General Practitioners n (SD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20 (40%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30 (60%)</td>
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Medical Practice Details n (SD)

| Average number of medical appointments/week in which SD is mentioned | 7.4 (7.9) |
| Average time of medical appointments in which SD is mentioned | 24.0 (8.2) |
| Estimated % of patients GPs actively ask about patients’ sexual problems | 15.5 (16.7) |
| Estimated % of patients that actively ask about sexual problems | 13.9 (13.2) |

In what concerns the adequacy of sources of training in elaborating the clinical sexual history, we found that the degree in Medicine is never considered as an extremely adequate source of information both for male and female sexual dysfunction.

Discussion and Conclusions

Our study showed that most GPs (76%) haven’t consulted any guidelines about diagnosis and treatment of DS during the last year, which is supported by another study in which lack of training/education/knowledge is considered the most important barrier in dealing with SD. Self-assessment of competences both in discussing and treating SD in male and female patients have shown no significant differences between sexes and these results are similar to another recent study. The need of continuous training in this area (91%) is also concordant with an erectile dysfunction management study. More than 50% of GPs also consider that their degree was not an adequate source of training. However, specialty and continuous training are considered as more adequate sources than the degree itself. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a need of both pre and post-graduate training in

References