Let’s Talk about Sex…and Older Adults

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Learning Objectives

- Have a greater awareness of the changing demographic composition (population aging) in America and how it is related to the need for sex education in later life.
- Walk away with a better understanding of how this presentation will highlight the benefits to aging individuals and their families when they have exposure to sex education and resources.
- Be exposed to evidence-based information and techniques that can be implemented in work with older adults to address issues surrounding sex education in later life.
Myths about Older Adult Sexuality

- Too Frail
- Asexual
- Humorous
- Filthy or perverted
- No longer desirable
- Sex is not a priority

(Morton, 2017)
Life Expectancy Pattern

LIFE EXPECTANCY IN U.S.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2018)
Other Measures of Life Expectancy

- **Active life expectancy**
  - Years one is able to perform activities of daily living without health-related difficulty
  - Currently 65 years
  - Expected to increase by 2.5 years by 2022

- **Sexual life expectancy**
  - “The average number of years remaining spent as sexually active” (DeLamater & Koespel, 2014).
Sexual revolution

In 2016 there were over 64 million people ages 60+ in the U.S.

Estimated 60+ population is 83.7 million by 2050

Social media use in older adults

(Connolly et. al, 2012)
(DeLamater & Koespel, 2014)
(Wion, 2015)
Reasons for Online Dating

- Serious relationship
- Friendship/companionship
- Casual dating
- Intimacy/sexual relations
- Secure/private

(Wion, 2015)
What is Sex?

- Intercourse
- Vaginal
- Anal
- Oral
- Other forms of sexual/physical intimacy
- Masturbation
- Foreplay

(Syme, 2014)
What about Intimacy?

- Intimacy: emotional response to being loved or cared for
- Sexual intimacy
  - emotional closeness
  - physical aspects
    - Intercourse
    - Cuddling
    - Caressing and touching
    - Genital stimulation
    - Simple touch of another human

(March, 2018)
Sex Across the Lifespan

- Longer living and better health
- “Critical for good relationship” 67% of men and 50% of women
- “Part of quality of life” 85% of men and 61% of women
- Shift in attitudes and beliefs
- “Sexuality is a need in humans that persists across the lifespan.”
- Intimacy rarely recognized as a right that does not diminish with age
- Right to sexual expression

(Connolly et al., 2012)
(Cooper, Kent & Crusse, 2016)
(Roney & Kazer, 2015)
(Syme, 2014)
Sexually Active Older Adults

- 73% of 57-64 year olds
- 53% of 65-74 year olds

(Ports, Barnack-Tavlaris, Syme, Perera, & Lafata, 2014)
Benefits of Healthy Sexual Activity

- Increased relaxation
- Improved cardiovascular health
- Lower levels of depression
- Decreased pain sensitivity
- Increased self-esteem
- Better relationships

(Cooper, Kent & Crusse, 2016)
Risky Sexual Behaviors/Factors

- Unprotected sexual encounters
- Lack of awareness: STD's/STI's, condom use
- Widowhood
- Use of erectile dysfunction drugs

(Gedin & Resnick, 2014)
STD’s and STI’s

- “An infection that is passed during sex”
- Any sexual orientation
- Any male/female
- Any age
- Any race

(Georgia Department of Public Health, 2018)
Sexually Transmitted Diseases or Infections

- Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)
- Chlamydia
- Genital Herpes
- Gonorrhea
- Human Papillomavirus Infection (HPV Infection)
- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID)
- Syphilis
- Trichomoniasis
- HIV/AIDS
- Hepatitis B and C

(Georgia Department of Public Health, 2018)
STD/STI Symptoms

- Sores around penis, vagina, rectum, mouth
- Unusual discharge
- Burning during urination
- Itching around genitals
- Vaginal bleeding
- Flu-like feelings

(Georgia Department of Public Health, 2016)
Georgia Department of Public Health: Reported Sexually Transmitted Disease Cases in Older Adults

Reported STD Cases in Adults Ages 60 - 85+

(Georgia Department of Public Health, 2018)
Why the Increase in STD’s?

- Remaining sexually active due to living longer and healthier lives
- Assistance from Viagra and other medications
- Retirement communities
- Lack of sexual education and information on condom use
- Social stigma

(DeLamater & Koespel, 2014)
Healthcare Providers- Why Not Discuss Sex?

- Rarely offer information on sexual health to older adults
- Tricky or awkward to discuss
- Believe that sex is not at top of priority list
- Societal ideas and beliefs
- Too personal
- Religious beliefs

(Connolly, Breckman, Callahan, et al, 2012) (Cooper, Kent & Crusse, 2016)
Older Adults - Why Not Discuss Sex?

- Limited view of safe sexual practices
- Stigma
- Fear of judgment

(Cooper, Kent & Crusse, 2016)
Tips for Caregivers/Healthcare Providers

- Develop rapport
- Language use
- Foster positivity in sexuality and sexual expression
- Don’t assume heterosexuality
- Check your own biases

(Brotman, Drummond, Silverman, et al, 2016)
(Cooper, Kent & Crusse, 2016)
Remember PATH

- **P**: Provide older adults with a supportive atmosphere when discussing sexual health
- **A**: Advocate for services to be provided
- **T**: Take time to listen and talk about sexual health
- **H**: Healthcare providers should understand own beliefs and biases in order to work supportively with older adults

(Cooper, Kent, Crusse, 2016)
PLISSIT Model

- **Permission**
  - Ask permission to discuss sexual health

- **Limited Information**
  - Provide limited information directly related to problem

- **Specific Suggestions**
  - Directly relate to answers provided from open-ended questions
  - Simple, direct, being mindful of health literacy

- **Intensive Therapy**
  - Not always a necessary step
  - Make referrals if/when therapy is necessary

(March, 2018)
If We Talk About It

- Disrupt ageist mentality
- Break social stigma
- Foster positivity and acceptance
- Inclusiveness in all portions of the lifespan
- Educate on safe sexual practices
- Help lower STD/STI rates in older adults
Find a partner to work with for this interactive activity.

One partner will be the older adult and one partner will take the role of caregiver/healthcare professional.

Could be an adult child, doctor, friend, etc.

Let’s break the ice and have a conversation…about sex!


