EXAMINING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG BODY IMAGE, SEXUALITY, AND SEXUAL FUNCTIONING IN WOMEN WITH CERVICAL AND ENDOMETRIAL CANCER

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Background

- More than 56,000 new diagnoses of endometrial cancer and 13,000 of cervical cancer occur annually
- Women with these cancers experience significant alterations in body image, sexuality, and sexual functioning

Study Aims

- Examine relationships among body image, sexuality, and sexual functioning
- Understand whether cancer and/or other factors influenced women's views of concepts, and which were most important

Methods

- Non-experimental cross-sectional design
- N=27 premenopausal adult women with stages I-III cervical or endometrial cancer, 3-36 months after completing treatment, and without major mental health issues
- Body Image Scale, Female Sexual Function Index, Female Sexuality Questionnaire, demographic form, open-ended items, and clinical data from medical chart
- Descriptive and correlational statistics, qualitative thematic analysis

Results

- Mean age was 40.3 years (range 27-56)
- Majority were White (55%), Non-Hispanic (90%), with some college education or more (70%), in long term relationships (65%), and with male partner preference (90%)
- Majority had cervical cancer (70%), stage I disease (60%), surgery (60%), and radiation (55%)

Descriptive Statistics			
(n=20)	Mean	(SD)	
Age (range = 27-56)	40.3	(9.0)	
Race	N	(%)	
African American	6	(30%)	
Asian	1	(5%)	
White	11	(55%)	
Other	2	(10%)	
Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino	2	(10%)	
Non-Hispanic or Latino	18	(90%)	

Cancer Type		
Cervical	14	(70%)
Endometrial	6	(30%)
Stage		
I	12	(60%)
II	5	(25%)
III	3	(15%)
HPV Status		
Positive	7	(35%)
Negative	1	(5%)
Not Available	12	(60%)
Surgery Type		
No Surgery	8	(40%)
Non-Radical	5	(25%)
Radical (laparotomy and lymph node removal)	7	(35%)

Radiation		
No	9	(45%)
Yes	11	(55%)
Chemotherapy		
No	11	(55%)
Yes	9	(45%)
Chemoradiation		
No	11	(55%)
Yes	9	(45%)

- Significant relationships were identified between body image and sexuality ($p = 0.0244$), and sexuality and sexual functioning ($p < 0.0003$), but not between body image and sexual functioning. Stages two and three disease were significantly associated with worse body image
- Women reported issues coded as body image, sexuality, sexual functioning, psychosocial, reproduction, and communication with healthcare providers/personal caregivers

Qualitative Analysis of Women's Responses to Open-Ended Items with Examples of Questions, Responses and Coded Categories		
Open-Ended Item (Frequency, Nature of Responses)	Example of Response(s) (Nature)	Coded Category with Sub-Categories
Q1 - How has cancer and its treatment affected your body image, sexuality or sexual function? (n = 15; 1 positive, 12 negative, 2 neutral)	"Treatment caused menopause which has affected my skin, hair, weight, etc. I feel I have aged 10 years since my treatment two years ago. I wasn't prepared for how I would look and feel following treatment. It has made me feel less desirable and less interested in pursuing relationships with sexual partners." (negative)	Body Image Menopause Sexual Functioning Desire Psychosocial
Q5 - Tell me about your communication with your providers (doctors, nurses, other) regarding body image, sexuality and sexual functioning. Communicate with healthcare providers? (n=17; 10 yes, 7 no) Of those who responded yes, communication with healthcare provider (n=10; 2 positive, 4 negative, 4 neutral)	"I feel like they didn't listen or believe me; I felt gaslit pertaining to my complaints and symptoms with phrases like "hmm that's uncommon" or "oh no, sorry to hear about sex." but then doing nothing or confusing my symptoms." (negative)	Sexual Functioning Communication Question-asking Listening

Discussion

- One of the first studies to simultaneously examine relationships among body image, sexuality, and sexual functioning.
- Findings highlight the importance of examining relationships
- Future research should explore relationships with selected demographic and clinical variables, and communication issues with health care providers and personal caregivers

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