

## HOW MUCH SIGNIFICANCE DO PATIENTS WITH SOMATIC ILLNESSES PUT ON SEXUAL FUNCTION?

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**Introduction:** Somatic diseases, as well as their treatment, may cause a variety of sexual dysfunctions. Different psychological, social, cultural barriers, beliefs and personal bias (patient's and physician's) towards sexual function often stand as a huge barrier to address sexual dysfunction issues in the rehabilitation process.

**Purpose:** To evaluate patients' attitudes towards the significance of sexual function for quality of life and the significance they put on their own sexual function.

**Methods:** Participants were asked to fill in the self-administered, anonymous survey, consisting of sociodemographic questions, questions about their health, sexual functioning and their attitudes towards the significance of sexual function.

**Results:** 203 patients (51.2 years  $\pm$  12.7) filled in the survey. 68% of them were female. MSC pathology was indicated by 32% of respondents, systemic connective tissue disorders - 25.6%, gynecological pathology – 17.7%, other chronic diseases – by 25.1% (14,9% did not answer). 63% of respondents agreed that their somatic disease hinders their sexual activity, 7% were not sure if the statement was true for them, and 29,5% expressed disagreement (0.5% - did not respond at all). The vast majority (78.3%) indicated sexual function to be important or very important for quality of life; 12.3% – held it to be moderately important, 1% – slightly important, 3% - completely insignificant (5.4% – provided no answer). However, the importance of their own sexual function appeared to be less relevant: just about half (55.2%) marked their sexual function to be important or very important for them (those were younger respondents, patients with better previous sexual experiences, more sexually active, and those who put more significance on sexual function in general ( $p < 0.05$ )).

**Discussion and Conclusion:** Majority of patients expressed an attitude that sexual function is significant for quality of life, indicated it to be important in their own life too and negatively impacted by somatic diseases.