Recent Trends, Advances and Innovations in Sexual Medicine

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Development of human sexuality is both multi-factorial and multi-faceted with an interplay of biological, psychological, social and developmental processes over the years.¹ Issues related to sexuality need to be considered in the light of the socio-economic conditions, institutionalized poverty, gender oppression, social inequality, cultural beliefs, stress, public policies and budget allocated for mental health improvement in a particular country. The analysis of gender power differentials in a particular culture is important in understanding the dynamic sexual relations and interactions.² ³ Asian cultures consider procreation as the sole purpose of sex; however the western cultures also give importance to the recreational aspect of human sexuality. Cultural factors are more likely to affect expression of distress due to sexual dysfunction although this would need further exploration. It has been hypothesized by Andrade in 2005 that many men may not able to adjust to the changing gender roles in India⁴ and probably in other Asian countries also, which may lead to relationship difficulties and sexual dysfunction.⁵ The current focus on human sexuality has drawn strength from community activism to secure the rights of women, gay men, people suffering from HIV/AIDS and other marginalized groups: activists supporting these groups have pushed for a more innovative research in sexual medicine, initially in the West and more recently in the developing countries.⁶

The Practice of sexual medicine has undergone tremendous changes in the last two decades.

The branch of sexual medicine is one of the most neglected areas both by the profession and the society and for the same reason many unscientific practices prevail.⁶ In India, a major part of the population never gets professional medical help in relation to sexual problems. The problems related to this field have been increasing and most patients get inadequate treatment, as they are handled by local quacks, faith healers and other non-professional individuals who project themselves as experts in the field. Poor knowledge of the problem, lack of adequate health facilities, lack of adequate number of professionals in the field and cultural influences have a negative impact on management of sexual dysfunction; hence we have a large vacuum which needs to filled up.

Recent research in sexual medicine has opened many avenues and given fresh insight into the etiology and management of sexual problems. Estimation of nitric oxide levels, Penile Doppler and MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), Penile Shock Wave therapy, Gene therapy and new drugs with novel targets, are some of the recent approaches to management of sexual dysfunction.⁷

Keywords: human sexuality, sexuality in South Asia, sexuality and culture, recent advances, sexual dysfunction

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