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Sexual function among middle-aged women attending primary health care facilities in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, South Africa

Abstract

Background: South African studies have demonstrated that the proportion of rural women living with sexual dysfunction is unknown.

Aim: To determine the proportion of women living with sexual dysfunction and factors associated with it.

Setting: This study was conducted at two rural primary care facilities in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, North West Province, South Africa.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted with 276 women aged 40 - 65 years from July to October 2017. The Female Sexual Function Index-19 with a cut-off score of ≤ 26.55 was used to assess sexual dysfunction. Sexual dysfunction disorder was defined as a combination of low female sexual function index (FSFI) score and personal sexual distress.

Results: One hundred eighty-two (66%) of the women analysed lived with sexual dysfunction and 85 (30.8%) with sexual dysfunction disorder. Only 8 (3%) of the total sample demonstrated a good sexual desire. Diabetes and hypertension were significant independent predictors of female sexual disorder ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Many middle-aged women experience poor sexual functioning, which can have a detrimental effect on their quality of life. It is important that Primary Care professionals actively screen for sexual functioning in women aged 40 - 65 years, especially those living with diabetes and hypertension. There is a need for advocacy for policy changes in South African

primary care to include sexual function screening in middle aged women, particularly those with hypertension and diabetes.

Key words: Middle age, women, sexual function, Diabetes, Hypertension, Primary care.