Sexuality and Occupational Therapy

Is it possible to influence clients’ intimacy?

Occupational Therapist Yuri Maritan
Question:
What are the occupations that can be offered by Occupational Therapists?
Are there limits?
THEORY NEEDED

SEXOLOGY
- Anatomy e fisiology
- Psico-social concepts

How do mind and emotions work?
How does the body work?

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
- ADL
- Theoretical models

Which occupations?
What meaning?

~ MOHO
~ CMOP
~ MOVI
INTRODUCTION

- Sexuality = a dynamic human experience, both biological and emotional
- Sex = activities that aim to be sexually satisfactory (definition given by AOTA)
Being ill does really change you and every little detail does matter."
...the role of OTs in understanding the needs for and issues with intimacy for our clients.

Aims...
Here (OT’s room) there is a lot of intimacy. It feels like home. A lot of emotions show up. Doors and boxes open, because here you have to get yourself involved."
METHOD

- Qualitative phenomenological study

PARTICIPANTS

- 14 adult patients (6 women, 8 men)
- Inclusion was not pathology-influenced

DATA ANALYSIS

- Semi-structured interviews
- Notes transcription
- Comparison of data to highlight key aspects and common elements
### Results

#### Talking about sex with clinicians

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<tr>
<td>Previous healthcare professionals’ interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapists’ interest</td>
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- Reasonable question
- Intervention more complete
- Privacy
- Other priorities
What does sexuality mean to patients?

Feelings
- Feeling attractive

Kisses, hugs and caresses

Sex
There are components and activities not equally acknowledged, still recurrent.

Getting dressed
Dealing with sexuality and personal experiences
Flirting/planning intimate moments
Cooking/planning a dinner
Putting on make-up
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<td>Sexuality = daily living component</td>
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<td>Sexuality = OT’s objective</td>
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Above all, those occupations seen as more personal and subjective.
«Being back in the kitchen, being able to put on make-up […] make me feel attractive again. I see myself as a wife again. This gave me something […] that surely will change my intimacy.»

_Int. 5_
From the movie «Autism in Love»

But it's still very difficult for me to find acceptance of myself.

«OCCUPATIONS»

Self-image

Intimacy
Conclusions

- The majority of the clients do wait for the clinicians to ask questions about their sexual lives.
- The majority of the clients do recognize the fundamental role that OTs can have in understanding their needs for and issues with.
- Sexuality and Occupations both influence a person’s self-image and function together reciprocally.
Thank you!