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Physiotherapy in women's health: access to information to improve the sexuality of young women

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Physiotherapy in women's health: access to information to improve the sexuality of young women

Fisioterapia na saúde da mulher: acesso à informação para melhoria da sexualidade de mulheres jovens
Fisioterapia en la salud de la mujer: acceso a la información para mejorar la sexualidad de las jóvenes

RESUMO

OBJETIVO: compreender por que e quais as motivações levam as mulheres jovens a buscarem informações sobre sexualidade e autoconhecimento através das redes sociais. **MÉTODO:** trata-se de pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa, com participação de 35 mulheres com idades entre 20 e 35 anos. Para coleta de dados, optou-se pela aplicação de questionário semiestruturado e a análise de dados seguiu as propostas de Bardin. **RESULTADO:** identificou-se que a internet é uma das formas mais utilizadas na busca de informações sobre sexualidade feminina devido à falta de liberdade que as mulheres jovens têm em se comunicar com a família ou profissionais especialistas. **CONCLUSÃO:** as redes sociais são uma importante ferramenta para educação sexual, pois leva as mulheres a terem curiosidade de conhecerem o próprio corpo e tratarem o tema sexualidade como algo comum, evitando traumas, desenvolvimento de disfunções, degradação da saúde física, sexual e mental.

Descritores: Fisioterapia; Saúde da Mulher; Sexualidade; Rede Social.

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To understand why and what motivates young women to seek information about sexuality and self-knowledge through social networks. **METHODS:** This is a qualitative research, with the participation of 35 women aged between 20 and 35 years. For data collection, we chose to apply a semi-structured questionnaire and data analysis followed Bardin's proposals. **RESULT:** It was identified that the internet is one of the most used ways to search for information about female sexuality due to the lack of freedom that young women have in communicating with family or professional specialists. **CONCLUSION:** Social networks are an important tool for sexual education, because it leads women to be curious about their own bodies and to treat the topic of sexuality as something common, avoiding traumas, development of dysfunctions, degradation of physical, sexual and mental health.

Descriptors: Physiotherapy; Women's Health; Sexuality; Social Network.

RESUMEN

OBJETIVO: comprender por qué y qué motivaciones llevan a las jóvenes a buscar información sobre sexualidad y autoconocimiento a través de las redes sociales. **MÉTODOS:** Se trata de una investigación cualitativa, con la participación de 35 mujeres de entre 20 y 35 años. Para la recogida de datos, se optó por la aplicación de un cuestionario semiestruturado y el análisis de los datos siguió las propuestas de Bardin. **RESULTADO:** Se identificó que internet es una de las formas más utilizadas en la búsqueda de información sobre la sexualidad femenina debido a la falta de libertad que tienen las jóvenes para comunicarse con la familia o los profesionales especialistas. **CONCLUSIÓN:** las redes sociales son una herramienta importante para la educación sexual, ya que lleva a las mujeres a sentir curiosidad por su propio cuerpo y a tratar el tema de la sexualidad como algo común, evitando traumas, desarrollo de disfunciones, degradación de la salud física, sexual y mental.

Descritores: Fisioterapia; Salud de La Mujer; Sexualidad; Red Social.

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INTRODUCTION

For many years, female sexuality was shaped by moral, ethical and behavioral standards within the cultural, social and family context and understood as non-existent. Most women did not realize how much this affected them. 1, 2

The religious context preached that women should have their desires smothered and repressed from an early age. Doubts about sex generated embarrassment and if women wanted something more, they would consciously or unconsciously feel a sense of error and guilt for things that should be completely normal. 1,2

After the two great wars, women began to gain autonomy and, from that point on, the topic of sexuality was more questioned among them. During this period, women began to gain their independence, which generated interaction and exchange of experiences, 3 in addition to the introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1960, which separated productive sex from pleasurable sex. 4

According to the World Health Orga-

The religious context preached that women should have their desires smothered and repressed from an early age.

nization, sexuality is “an energy that motivates us to find love, contact, tenderness and intimacy; it integrates with the way we feel, move, touch and are touched, it is to be sensual and at the same time to be sexual. Sexuality influences thoughts, feelings, actions and interactions and, therefore, also influences our physical and mental health”.5

Female sexuality is more complex than male sexuality, as it has its own characteristics that make it different. In the case of women, they have basic emotions and needs that need to be appreciated and satisfied. And this is due to the physiological aspect, which gives women a greater capacity to experience and feel their own body. 2

Social networks become a strong ally for women, in order to bring information about self-knowledge and sexuality due to the possible lack of exchange of experiences between family members and/or health professionals.6 As contemporary society demands quick responses, social networks emerge as a potentiating element of such processes.

Currently, this theme has gained a lot

of space in the female world and has been presented as something that should be exposed and discussed even through social media. 6,7 Faced with this, we have seen many health professionals, including physiotherapists, who are using social networks to promote women's sexual health and provide access to information about self-knowledge. 7

It is believed that there is an increase in the search for information on this topic through social networks due to the lack of dialogue with the family or professionals specializing in this area of health. 5,7 This reduction in information can affect sexuality and, consequently, worsen the quality of life of these women.

Considering that, when the media conveys information to the female audience, there is a connection between social networks and their influence on women's behavior in relation to sexuality, this study has the following objective: to understand why and what motivations lead young women to seek information about sexuality and self-knowledge through social networks.

METHODS

This is a research with a qualitative approach, which, according to Minayo, works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes, regardless of whether the samples are relatively small. 8

Data collection was carried out from February to April 2021 with the participation of 35 women aged between 20 and 35 years old. The invitation to participate was made through publication on social networks. Women who did not have access to digital media were excluded.

The first approach to women was to explain about the research and to sign the Informed Consent Form. The questionnaire was applied in a reserved place, chosen by the participant, preserving anonymity and privacy. It is worth noting that some questionnaires were conducted through video calls and recorded in audio due to the distance between cities or by choice of the interviewees.

The benefit of this study refers to the development of scientific knowledge in the field of Physiotherapy in Women's Health, as well as the understanding of the importance of social networks in the dissemination of knowledge about self-knowledge and sexuality among young women. The risk related to the execution of this research would be the embarrassment in reporting some information.

As a collection instrument, a semi-structured questionnaire was chosen, previously elaborated by the researchers. Data analysis had as methodological support the content analysis proposed by Bardin 9 through the following steps: 1) Transcription of interviews; 2) Unitarization of texts, with the reduction of the text in paraphrases; 3) categorization system; 4) Interpretation of data.

The observations aimed to identify the perception of self-knowledge and sexuality of the women interviewed, trying to understand the existing "conflicts and tensions", paying attention to ethical aspects, traditions, customs, feelings and social relations.

This research met the precepts of resolution 510/16, 10 was approved after analysis by the Research Ethics Committee/UNIPAC CAAE: 40687820.1.0000.5156, with approval number 4.476.357.

RESULTS

Women's perception about the search for information related to self-knowledge and sexuality with the family.

The analysis of this category showed that there is difficulty in communication between women and their families about this topic.

"Because at home I can't talk about this subject, my mother is very old, she was raised by relationships that were just holding hands, so I'm not at liberty to talk about it with her."
(B1)

It is possible to emphasize that the logic of reproduction is present, prevailing vei-

led forms of freedom. The search for full performance and sexual pleasure remains far from being achieved, which may be a product of the lack of strengthening of self-knowledge, as well as the need for knowledge that is covered up due to the history of prejudice experienced by women. 11

The testimonies showed that women only aroused curiosity about the subject after engaging in sexual intercourse with a partner and/or through people not prepared to talk about the subject correctly, such as through friends, pornographic industry or the first sexual partner.

"I realized that I needed to get to know myself more when I had my first sexual relationship, it was horrible, because both me and the partner didn't know anything {...}"
(B1)

"At school we were always saying something, telling each other about body changes." (B4)

The subject of sexuality and/or self-knowledge, in most cases, is presented to them in an indecorous way, with women being forced to discover themselves in their adolescence or after adulthood. 12

Perception of women who use social media to research sexuality.

It was identified that most women still do not know where and what to look for on the subject. It highlights the insufficient knowledge about their own body, the taboo barrier and the shame of doing something that was previously seen as sinful.

"Oh I don't know, I know I don't know myself. I think we come from a culture that we are repressed at this point. I think I'm ashamed or I think it's because of lack of information." (A4)

Social networks were beneficial during the self-knowledge cycles as well as for physical and emotional health, as shown in the report below:

"{...} What I knew was after I joined social networks, that we see a lot of things talking about this on the internet, right?" (C1)

However, the interviews showed that social networks, with Instagram and YouTube being the most cited, are more effective as a "gateway" to subjects that were previously unknown to these women and based on the new information, curiosity arises in deepening the subject through the internet or exchange experiences with professionals and/or friends.

The existing stigmas about sexuality create barriers for people to talk about, 2 because the interviews, as well as other studies, 7 show that women find it easier to disclose information about various subjects or even about themselves online, as it does not require direct contact.

"There are people who can't really speak or use it because of the possibility of anonymity, because for you to ask a question on the internet you don't exactly need to specify who you are and there are people who have doubts {...}." (B3)

Perception of young women vis-à-vis professionals in the field of women's health

Another reason identified for the search for self-knowledge and sexuality was the lack of openness on the subject in consultations with specialists, as shown in the reports below:

"The experts don't ask how the sex is, only how I have sex, it seems they care more about the physiological aspect than anything else." (A3).

"{...} I only had one gynecologist who asked me about sexuality and it was at my first gynecological appointment, when I was no longer a virgin and then the gynecologist asked in front of my mother if I was a virgin and it was very embarrassing and, after I got older no one asked me about my sexuality

anymore and that makes me search more about sexuality." (A1).

As for the role of physical therapists in women's health, it was noticed that a large portion of the interviewees is unaware of this area of expertise. The women who presented such knowledge had or are taking a degree in physiotherapy and this theme is part of the course's curriculum.

DISCUSSION

The research showed a deficit in the knowledge of young women about their own bodies due to the lack of freedom to communicate with their families and with specialist professionals about sexuality and self-knowledge.

Data analysis and other studies show that feelings of shame and embarrassment are factors that make it difficult to look for a professional specialist, especially if he is a man. For an evaluation or consultation it is necessary to touch or manipulate areas considered erogenous, however, women relate the consultation to sexuality. 13 Therefore, there is a need to strengthen ties between specialists in women's health, especially physiotherapists, and patients, as it is an area of interest and relevance in the female world. 7,14

Therefore, women expect and want humanized care, and this includes issues outside the scope of the disease, giving them freedom of choice and autonomy 15 because introducing a humanistic model of health care would help to improve women's comfort, satisfaction and re-consultation. 14

The fact that Instagram and YouTube are the most cited social networks can be justified by the fact that they become a great personal marketing tool for healthcare professionals, 16 being a bargaining chip between patients/professionals, as social networks in addition to strengthening ties and creating an educational work that does not exist in public policy effectively, 5,12 they also lead women to create curiosities about their own bodies, favoring self-knowledge, improving sexuality 7 and consequent health promotion, as it involves the

active participation of the population.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it is concluded that women must understand their own body through veridical and specialized sources. Social networks are an important tool for sexual education, leading young women to be curious to know their own bodies and to treat the topic of sexuality as common, avoiding traumas, development of dysfunctions, degradation of physical, sexual and mental health. Therefore, this issue should be of great relevance to public health, since educational policies could be developed from childhood, where the formation of sexuality begins.

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