

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PELVIC FLOOR PHYSIOTHERAPY ON SEXUAL FUNCTION IN FEMALES SUFFERING FROM DYSpareunia: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Female dyspareunia is a pain symptom of sexual function which can be attributed to pelvic floor dysfunction. The management remains poorly discussed and a lack of adequate knowledge regarding dyspareunia within the medical profession has been highlighted.

The aim of this systematic review is to explore the current literature for factors that can influence the effectiveness of physiotherapy in managing sexual pain. The question to provide guidance for the improvement of patient care can be formulated as: which factors influence the effectiveness of physiotherapy in the management of dyspareunia?

Seven key randomised control trials were selected and assessed for quality. A narrative synthesis was chosen to identify influential factors to physiotherapy interventions within the selected literature.

Five out of the seven studies demonstrated that a variety of physiotherapy treatments statistically significantly improved sexual function, as measured by the Female Sexual Function Index. The largest and most consistent degree of improvement was observed in the pain domain of this questionnaire.

Key influential factors illustrated the relationship between sufficient clinical knowledge and evidence-based decision-making. Helping to direct treatment choice, patient selection and counselling. Through the collation of these influential factors the process of shared decision-making was highlighted as a key action leading to the improvement of physiotherapy management in females suffering from dyspareunia.

Shared- and evidence-informed decision-making recognise that improved patient understanding and a chance to voice preference, provides the opportunity to elicit greater compliance and satisfaction. Further research is necessary to understand physiotherapy utilisation of shared decision-making within this specialised field.

Keywords: Dyspareunia, Pelvic Floor, Physiotherapy, Shared decision-making, Systematic Review

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