

## Definition

### Psychosexual problem<sup>1</sup>:

- Disturbance of sexual functioning
- Caused by mental and emotional difficulties concerning sexuality, rather than physical disorders

### Introduction<sup>2</sup>

- Affects around 7% of women of reproductive age
- Symptoms include: hirsutism, acne, alopecia, oligomenorrhea or amenorrhea, obesity and infertility
- Cause is unknown and there is no cure – management focuses on symptom control
- Psychological implications include: depression, anxiety and eating disorders

Sexual functioning, to many, is an important part of life and disturbances of it can affect drastically quality of life. It can be affected by many factors, including physical symptoms and mental wellbeing. I will explore the psychosexual effects of PCOS.



Figure 1: Two Barbie dolls

## Study 1: Quality of Life, Psychosocial Well-Being, and Sexual Satisfaction in Women with PCOS<sup>3</sup>

A 2003 German cross-sectional study

### Method

- Recruited 50 women with PCOS and 50 without
- Given three questionnaires which combined many established questionnaires, and scales for impact of PCOS symptoms

### Results

- Women with PCOS and women without had a similar frequency of :
  - Sexual intercourse, thoughts and fantasies
- However, women with PCOS were significantly less likely to be:
  - Satisfied with their sex life
  - Likely to find themselves sexually attractive
- Also, women with PCOS were significantly more likely to believe excessive body hair negatively impacted their attractiveness; and have depression

### Discussion

This study took into account variables like hirsutism, but it was a small sample size, and not all participants had a sexual partner making the sample size even smaller. Also, not all aspects of sexuality were analysed.

## Study 2: Sexual Function and Socio-Sexual Difficulties in Women with PCOS<sup>4</sup>

A 2019 German cross-sectional study

### Method

- Recruited 44 women with PCOS, and the control group was comprised of data from previous studies
- Given one extensive questionnaire, containing scales and open questions
- Included questions about variables including hirsutism

### Results

- Results showed many similarities between women with PCOS and without
- However, women with PCOS were significantly more likely to:
  - Have impaired sexual functioning
  - Lower sexual confidence
  - Higher feelings of sexual inadequacy in sexual situations
- In women with PCOS, sexual inadequacy and confidence was correlated with degree of hirsutism

### Discussion

Researchers created a huge questionnaire, allowing most of sexual functioning to be assessed. However, like study one the sample size was small and also conducted in Germany, so data may not be representative of the whole PCOS population.

### Conclusion

Women with PCOS are significantly more likely to experience psychosexual disturbances, with degree of body hair causing worse outcomes.

The studies, conducted 16 years apart, yielded similar results. However, more research is required with more extensive questioning and larger, more representative study sizes.

Psychosexual medicine is in its infancy and can be confronted with embarrassment, but it is important clinicians discuss sexual functioning with their PCOS patients.

## References

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Figure 3: A woman stressfully tries to remove her excessive facial hair growth

## Symptoms of PCOS (especially hirsutism)

- Decreased sexual satisfaction
- Decreased sexual self-esteem

- Anxiety
- Depression

**Result**  
Poorer sexual experience

Figure 2: A flowchart demonstrating the psychosexual impact of PCOS (constructed by myself)