

# Genital arousal disorder adversely impacts women's lives

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New research shows that women suffering from Persistent Genital Arousal Disorder (PGAD), a condition marked by unprovoked, intrusive and persistent sensations of genital arousal that are unrelieved by one or several orgasms, are likely to experience a variety of associated psychological conditions.

Women who have this rare and often distressing condition often experience related depression, anxiety, panic attacks and frequently show a past history of sexual victimization. The condition is accompanied by frustration, guilt, anxiety and distress for the sufferer. The first-ever study on PGAD appears in the current issue of *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*.

Although exact prevalence figures are unknown, the condition may not be as rare as initially believed. To date, hundreds of women around the world have completed a comprehensive web-based survey posted on a variety of women's health-related websites, inviting women who experienced symptoms of persistent genital arousal to respond. Information concerning the correlating psychological, medical and pharmacological factors was thus able to be identified.

“The complaint of persistent genital arousal deserves serious research attention since it is accompanied by a considerable amount of psychological distress, and yet the cause and treatment remain undefined,” says Sandra Leiblum, Ph.D., senior author of the study and former President of the International Society for the Study of Women's

## Sexual Health.

Results from this study suggest that a majority of women who suffer from PGAD also have pre-existing stress related illnesses. However, “PGAD is most certainly not ‘all in the mind,’ and these women should be assessed thoroughly with empathy and careful attention to their symptoms and history,” says David Goldmeier, M.D., co-author of the study. “Although no physical illness or medication showed up as a cause of PGAD in this study, I would urge women to initially consult a sympathetic physician.”

Irwin Goldstein, Editor-in-Chief of The Journal of Sexual Medicine, observed, “Women of all ages, ranging from teens to menopause, currently suffer from this obtrusive sexual problem. More research efforts to better understand and treat this unusual under-inhibited sexual condition are strongly needed.”

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