

Study shows sexual dysfunction after gynecologic cancer treatment

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A University of Colorado Cancer Center study presented at the American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting 2015 shows decreased sexual activity in women following treatment for gynecologic cancers, down from 6.1-6.8 times per month before treatment to 2.6-4.9 times per month after treatment.

"It is a topic that not many people want to talk about because it is uncomfortable," says Saketh Guntupalli, MD, investigator at the University of Colorado Cancer Center and assistant professor in the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at the CU School of Medicine. "However for us it is about maintaining the quality of life after treatment for couples that have gone through it."

Every year nearly 90,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with a gynecological cancer including cancer of the cervix, uterus, ovaries, vagina, and vulva. These women undergo treatments including radiation, chemotherapy, and surgery.

Guntupalli and his team worked with researchers from three institutions - Denver Health Medical Center in Colorado, Columbia University in New York, and Loma Linda University in California - to survey 315 women about their [sexual health](#). The 181-question survey was taken online or in person and primarily focused on assessing sexual and marital dysfunction before and after [cancer treatment](#).

"The results of the survey are very interesting and give us good insight

about what happens after treatment," says Guntupalli.

In addition to showing an overall decrease in sexual frequency after cancer treatment, the data show that younger, premenopausal women are at higher risk for sexual dysfunction. So are women who received chemotherapy or are in committed relationships. Despite decreased [sexual activity](#), there was no accompanying increase in marital dysfunction.

The survey concludes that [women](#) treated for gynecological cancers are at a significant risk for [sexual dysfunction](#) but not marital dysfunction after treatment is complete.

"We think that if couples are given the option to go to counseling during cancer treatment it may help with their sexual health in the long run," explains Guntupalli. "If we can catch those patients that may have problems up front and offer interventions, especially younger couples, it can really enhance life after cancer."

More information:

abstracts.asco.org/156/AbstView_156_153276.html

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