Medical Xpress

One in six men and women feel that their health affects their sex life

December 17 2013

A new study, published in *The Lancet* as part of the third National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal), systematically assesses the association between individuals' general health and their sex lives, finding that close to one in six (17%) of men and women in Britain say that their health affects their sex life. This proportion rises to three fifths (60%) among men and women who say they are in bad health.

The new findings show the extent to which ill-health is linked to whether people have sex, as well as satisfaction with their sex lives. Additionally, the research shows that only a quarter of men (24%) and under a fifth of women (18%) who say that ill-health affected their sex life in the past year sought help from a health professional, usually a GP. The authors of the study suggest that health professionals should consider giving greater attention to providing appropriate advice on patients' sex lives as part of their wider health.

According to study lead author Dr Nigel Field, of University College London (UCL): "Our findings indicate that many patients with chronic ill-health are well aware of an effect of their health on their sex lives, but most (over three quarters) do not seek help from health professionals. This suggests a need to raise awareness, improve guidance, and build communication skills among health professionals in talking to patients who may be concerned about how their health affects their sex life."

The researchers, from UCL (University College London), the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and NatCen Social Research,

found that the proportion of people who had recently had sex (within the past four weeks) declined with age, and that sexual activity was also lower among those who reported being in bad health than among those who reported being in very good health. This association with health remained even after the results were adjusted to account for age and whether respondents were in a relationship.

The researchers also analysed the associations between sexual satisfaction, age and health. Overall, around three fifths (60%) of men and women reported being satisfied with their sex lives, though this proportion was lower in older people. Lower levels of satisfaction were associated with poorer health, with the association again remaining after adjustment for age and relationship status.

However, although the overall results show a clear association between ill-health and individuals' sex lives, the researchers point out that many people who are in bad health report being sexually active and/or satisfied with their sex life. Around a third of respondents who were in bad health reported recent sexual activity, and just under half of the same group reported being satisfied with their sex life.

Provided by Wellcome Trust

Citation: One in six men and women feel that their health affects their sex life (2013, December 17) retrieved 25 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-men-women-health-affects-sex.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.