

**OLDER,
WISER,
SEXUALLY SMARTER**

**What Every Professional Needs to Know
about Sexuality in Mid & Later Life**

Peggy Brick, M. Ed, Anita Hoffer, Ph.D, Katharine Forsythe, MSW

The NEW SEXUAL REVOLUTION

**“Vital SOCIAL MOVEMENT Promotes a NEW VISION of
SEXUALITY in OLDER AGE.” ASA, Aging Today**

- **Confronting AGISM**
- **Recognizing people are sexual from birth until death**
- **Educating older people & those who serve them**
- **Proclaiming the right to be sexual throughout life**

JOKES & CARTOONS

- **Introduce a topic**
- **Reduce anxiety**
- **Encourage participation**
- **Examine stereotypes of sex & aging**
- **Make us laugh – at ourselves!**

The CONSORTIUM— on SEXUALITY & AGING

- Sexuality education for older adults
- Professional development for staff
 - in the community
 - in Assisted Living homes
 - in Nursing Homes
- Website: sexualityandaging.com
- Book: *Older, Wiser, Sexually Smarter*

**Sexuality Profile in Older Women: Facts,
Concerns, Opportunities, Consequences
and Health Benefits ©**

Anita P. Hoffer, MS, PhD, EdD (c)

ASA/NCOA, Chicago

March 16, 2010

© *Anita P. Hoffer*

aphoffer@earthlink.net

Research Survey–Sexuality Profile of Older Women

(Hoffer, 2009)

- 153 participants, 60-75 years old
- mostly white, heterosexual, educated
- average age: 65.9 years
- > 2/3 of the women had not had any formal sex education in school

Sexual Activity

(Hoffer, 2009)

- **Current frequency of masturbation to orgasm**
 - **Mean frequency: 2.8 times/mo (range 0-30 times/mo)**
 - **13 women had not masturbated at all in the past year**
- **In women who masturbated**
 - **~ 52% did so one time or less per month**
 - **Nearly all (96%) masturbated less than 9 times per month**
- **Current frequency of heterosexual intercourse (in the past year)**
 - **Average # of times per month: 2.3**

Sexual Fantasy and Pleasure

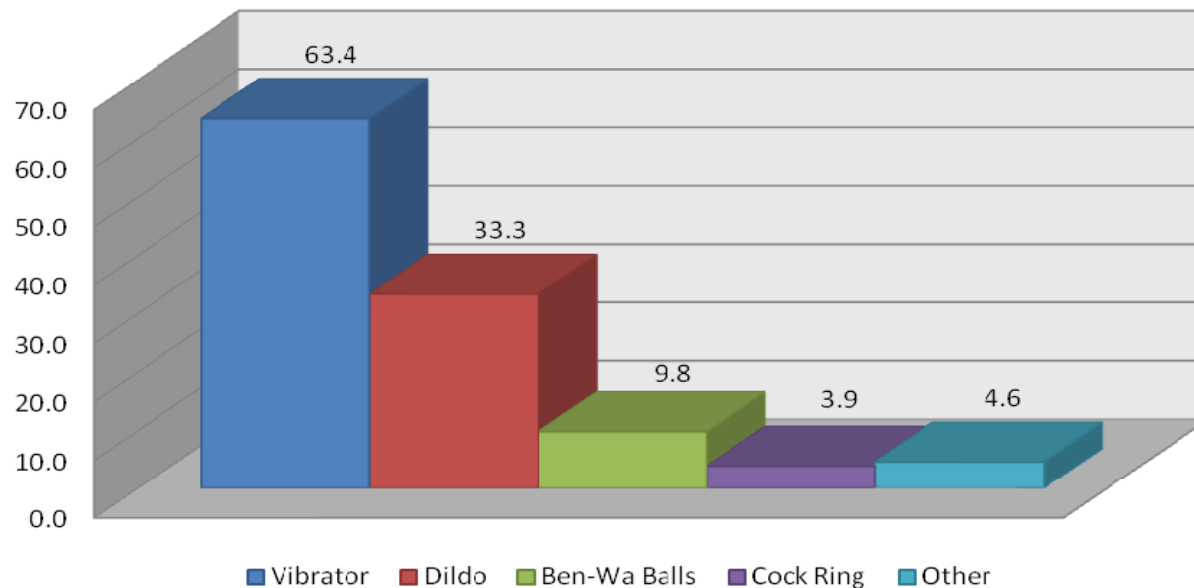
(Hoffer, 2009)

- **Sexual fantasies of older women include a wide variety of activities**
 - **Most common: intercourse and oral sex**
 - **Less than a third fantasized about less conventional behaviors**
- **The most pleasurable behaviors on average were intercourse and oral sex.**
- **On average, women who participated in less conventional behaviors found them “somewhat enjoyable”**

Which Sex Aids Have You Used & Were They Useful?

(Hoffer, 2009)

Percent of Respondents Who Have Used the Following Sex Aids



7 Common Physical Changes During Sex in Older Women

- **Increased time from arousal to orgasm**
- **Orgasm: fewer contractions and decreased intensity**
- **Shrinkage of the clitoris**
- **Decreased vaginal elasticity and lubrication**
- **Lack of increase in breast size with stimulation**
- **Decrease in overall tactile sensation**
- **Changes in patterns of desire and arousal**

Most Common Symptoms Associated with these Biological Changes

- **Painful sex due to dry vagina, lower estrogen & progesterone**
- **Low or absent sexual desire - takes longer to become aroused - possibly due to lower blood levels of testosterone**
- **Weaker, delayed or absent orgasms – may be due to physical, emotional, and/or relationship difficulties**
- **Changes in body image, illness, complex life situations, loss of partner**
- **Incontinence**

Defining Sex for Older Women

- Sexuality is a complex, dynamic aspect of a woman's experience; the range of 'normal' is far broader than any of us realizes.
- We are 'culturally conditioned' to believe that sex is only "real" and "normal" if it involves intercourse.
 - Only ~30% of women regularly climax from intercourse alone
 - Many women surveyed feel that other forms of sexual stimulation are equally pleasurable.
- When intercourse is valued so highly, sexual experiences common in older adults become sexual *problems* that 'need' treatment.
- *Re-defining the meaning of sex can be especially important to older women!*

A New Way to Think about Sexual Success

- **Sex is whatever gives you erotic sensual pleasure either with an intimate partner or yourself – and deepens your relationship with your partner or your self in a way that is satisfying, nurturing and/or growth-promoting.**
- **Sex does not have to include intercourse, masturbation, orgasm or even a partner.**

Sexual Response Models – Old & New

- **Masters & Johnson Linear Model (1964)**
 - Same arousal pattern for men and women
 - Components: excitement, plateau, orgasm, resolution
 - Many women do not experience all of these phases
 - This biological focus ignores pleasure, satisfaction, relationship
- **Basson Circular Model of Female Sexual Arousal (2003)**
 - More modern, circular model of *responsive/triggered desire* rather than spontaneous desire arising *de novo*
 - Empowers women to experience sex in the context of relationship
- **Key components of the Basson Model:**
 - decision, rather than a drive, to have sex
 - “willingness to be receptive”
 - the sensations of a partner’s touch & awareness of being aroused
 - then the “responsive desire” along with increasingly intense arousal
 - at last the range of physical and emotional payoffs that sex can provide leading to positive reinforcement and a wish to repeat the experience of intimacy

How Does The New Model Relate to Sexuality in Older Women?

- **Expand the opportunities for sexual pleasure**
- **Eliminate idea that orgasm is the be-all/end-all of sex**
- **“Getting there” is no longer a goal but rather a bonus to an already pleasurable event**

“C” is for *Consequences* !

A blue, furry Cookie Monster character is shown from the chest up, holding a red condom wrapper in its right hand. The character has large white eyes and a wide, open mouth. The background is a plain, light color.

C is for Condoms

"Hot girls love eating me cookies!"

Cookie Monster
loves the girls.
And that's why he wears
Cookie Flavored Condoms every
time he goes home with
some hot girl monster.

Monster Condoms
Cookie Flavored

North 1000.com



Older Adults Need to Learn Safer Sex Procedures

- In general, increases in sexually-transmitted infection (“STI”) rates are most prominent in older people.
- In the UK, cases of chlamydia, genital herpes (HSV), gonorrhea, syphilis and genital warts (HPV) more than doubled in this age group
- Up to 1/5 of Americans have genital herpes....and up to 90% of them don't know it
- ~ 18% of AIDS cases in US females are in women over 50
- In last 10 years, AIDS in women over 50 has tripled
- Older women are not inclined to think about safer sex because they no longer fear pregnancy

Benefits of a Healthy Sex Life



10 Health Benefits of Sex in Older Adults

- **Relieves stress (lowers blood pressure)**
- **Boosts immunity**
- **Burns calories**
- **Improves cardiovascular health**
- **Helps you sleep better**
- **Strengthens PC muscles - creates more pleasure & minimizes incontinence**
- **Reduces pain**
- **May reduce prostate cancer risk**
- **May reduce breast cancer risk**
- **Improves intimacy**

The Silver Sexual Revolution:

The first wave

- ages 75 to 100+ -

*is assertively paving the way
for 80 million boomers*

Katherine Forsythe, MSW

<http://getasecondwind.com>

Silver Sexual Revolution 75+

The Stats:

- 25% active sexual expression
 - 90% sexual thoughts
 - 17% desire to act on thoughts
-

- 17% increased libido
 - 10% hypersexual
-

- HIV 10% new cases

Silver Sexual Revolution 75+

What can we do?

- ✓ **Promote *intimacy*** – pleasure not performance
 - ✓ **Be prepared:** lube, condoms, *and your glasses*
-

- ✓ **Get staff trained** in “what to do and how to do it”
- ✓ **Be sensitive to change** and loss
- ✓ **Advocate** for the whole person

***Join the conversation about
sexuality!***

The Silver Sexual Revolution: 75 to 100+

Katherine Forsythe, MSW

<http://getasecondwind.com>

***Field Guides* for Handling Sexual Expression in
Care Communities: For Professionals Who
Champion Older Adults**

***Field Guides* to Intimacy, Relationships, and
Sexuality for Older Adults**