

## **Is Sex and Chronic Pain Incompatible?**

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**Rational/Background:** Chronic pain is a condition that affects almost a third of the Portuguese population, and comorbid sexual dysfunctions are frequent. The relationship between chronic pain and sexuality is bidirectional and complex. Although it is not a common priority for these patients, the treatment of sexual dysfunctions allows the improvement of general health and facilitates the control of the pain condition. Sexuality is still a difficult topic to address by patients as well as by health professionals, which may lead to the absence of treatment of sexual dysfunctions when present.

**Research Question:** It is possible to establish several research questions with this study, namely: what is the sexual functioning of patients with chronic pain; what are the referral and treatment needs to clinical sexology of patients with chronic pain; what is the prevalent psychopathology in patients with chronic pain; are chronic pain characteristics or the presence of psychopathology influencing the sexual functioning of chronic pain patients; what are the influencing factors for seeking treatment in clinical sexology by patients with chronic pain.

**Methods:** We intend to collect a sample of 100 patients of both sexes at the Chronic Pain Consultation of the Centro Hospitalar de Lisboa Ocidental. The protocol includes an informed consent, a questionnaire, specifically created for this study, on the approach to sexual dysfunction in the context of health care, a measure of pain intensity, the Brief Symptom Inventory, the Brief Pain Inventory, the Female Sexual Function Index, the International Index of Erectile Function and the Sexual Dysfunction Inventory (female or male version).

**Results:** The data collection is still on-going. We will present preliminary results.

**Conclusions:** As possible future implications, the inclusion of sexual functioning parameters in the regular evaluation of chronic pain patients is conjectured, as well as the increased frequency of detection and treatment of sexual dysfunctions in these patients.

**Keywords:** Chronic Pain; Sexual Dysfunctions; Secondary Prevention

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