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## **ТИББИЁТДА ЯНГИ КУН НОВЫЙ ДЕНЬ В МЕДИЦИНЕ NEW DAY IN MEDICINE**

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## ASSESSMENT OF PHYSICIANS AWARENESS OF SEXUAL DYSFUNCTIONS IN WOMEN WITH NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS

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### ✓ Resume

**Objective:** Sexual dysfunctions (SD) significantly impact the quality of life (QoL) and mental health of women with neurological disorders. Despite this, the awareness of physicians regarding SD diagnosis and management remains insufficient due to cultural, social, and educational barriers. This study aimed to evaluate the knowledge, competence, and attitudes of healthcare professionals toward SD in women with neurological conditions and to identify their training needs. **Methods:** A survey was conducted among 34 specialists, including 19 neurologists and 15 physicians specializing in physical therapy and rehabilitation. Participants completed a structured questionnaire developed by the Department of Rehabilitology, Traditional Medicine, and Physical Education at Tashkent Medical Academy (TMA). The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions divided into three blocks. **Results:** The survey revealed significant gaps in physicians' competence and resources for addressing SD. Only 5% of participants reported feeling sufficiently competent in discussing SD, and 95% rarely or never initiated conversations on sexual health. A lack of specialized training and resources was identified as a major obstacle by 100% of participants, with 85% citing cultural and social barriers and 75% reporting time and resource constraints. Additionally, 90% of physicians expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of quality educational materials on sexual medicine. **Discussion:** Cultural taboos, insufficient training, and limited access to resources hinder physicians' ability to effectively address SD in women with neurological disorders. These barriers result in missed opportunities for early diagnosis and intervention, exacerbating the negative impact of SD on patients' QoL and mental health. Addressing these challenges requires integrating sexual medicine into medical education, creating accessible training programs, and fostering an open environment for discussing sexual health. **Conclusion:** Empowering healthcare providers with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage SD in women with neurological disorders can improve patient outcomes and enhance their QoL. Overcoming cultural and educational barriers is crucial for ensuring comprehensive and effective care for this vulnerable patient population.

**Keywords:** sexual dysfunction, neurological disorders, physician awareness, sexology, rehabilitation, quality of life.

## ОЦЕНКА ОСВЕДОМЛЕННОСТИ ВРАЧЕЙ О СЕКСУАЛЬНЫХ ДИСФУНКЦИЯХ У ЖЕНЩИН С НЕВРОЛОГИЧЕСКИМИ НАРУШЕНИЯМИ

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### ✓ Резюме

**Цель исследования:** Сексуальные дисфункции (СД) значительно влияют на качество жизни (КЖ) и психическое здоровье женщин с неврологическими нарушениями. Тем не менее, уровень осведомленности врачей в отношении диагностики и лечения СД остается недостаточным из-за культурных, социальных и образовательных барьеров. Целью данного исследования было оценить знания, компетенции и отношение медицинских специалистов к диагностике и



лечению СД у женщин с неврологическими заболеваниями, а также выявить их потребности в обучении. Методы: Был проведен опрос 34 специалистов, включая 19 неврологов и 15 врачей, специализирующихся на физической терапии и реабилитации. Участники заполнили структурированную анкету, разработанную кафедрой реабилитологии, традиционной медицины и физического воспитания Ташкентской медицинской академии (ТМА). Анкета включала 14 вопросов, разделенных на три блока. Результаты: Опрос выявил значительные пробелы в компетенциях врачей и ресурсах для решения вопросов СД. Только 5% участников сообщили, что чувствуют себя достаточно компетентными в обсуждении СД, и 95% редко или никогда не иницируют разговоры о сексуальном здоровье. Недостаток специализированного обучения и ресурсов был определен как основное препятствие для 100% участников. Культурные и социальные барьеры отметили 85%, а нехватку времени и ресурсов — 75%. Кроме того, 90% врачей выразили недовольство доступностью качественных образовательных материалов по сексуальной медицине. Выводы: Обеспечение медицинских специалистов необходимыми знаниями и навыками для работы с СД у женщин с неврологическими заболеваниями может улучшить результаты лечения и повысить их КЖ. Преодоление культурных и образовательных барьеров имеет решающее значение для предоставления всеобъемлющей и эффективной помощи данной уязвимой категории пациентов.

Ключевые слова: сексуальные дисфункции, неврологические нарушения, осведомленность врачей, сексология, реабилитация, качество жизни.

## NEUROLOGIK KASALLIKLARI BO'LGAN AYOLLARDA JINSIY DISFUNKTSIYALAR DIAGNOSTIKASI VA DAVOLASH BO'YICHA SHIFOKORLARNING XABARDORLIGINI BAHOLASH

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### ✓ Rezyume

Tadqiqot maqsadi: Seksual disfunktsiyalar (SD) neurologik kasalliklari bo'lgan ayollarning hayot sifati (HS) va ruhiy salomatligiga jiddiy ta'sir ko'rsatadi. Shunga qaramay, shifokorlarning SD diagnostikasi va davolash bo'yicha xabardorlik darajasi madaniy, ijtimoiy va ta'lim bilan bog'liq to'siqlar tufayli yetarli emas. Ushbu tadqiqotning maqsadi SD bo'yicha neurologik kasalliklarga chalingan ayollar bilan ishlashda tibbiyot xodimlarining bilimlari, kompetensiyasi va munosabatlarini baholash hamda ushbu sohada o'qitishga bo'lgan ehtiyojlarni aniqlashdan iborat edi. Material va metodlar: Tadqiqotda 34 mutaxassis, shu jumladan 19 nevrolog va 15 jismoniy davolash va reabilitatsiya bo'yicha shifokor ishtirok etdi. Ishtirokchilar Toshkent Tibbiyot Akademiyasining (TTA) Reabilitologiya, An'anaviy Tibbiyot va Jismoniy Tarbiya Kafedrasi tomonidan ishlab chiqilgan strukturalangan so'rovnoma to'ldirishdi. So'rovnoma 14 ta savoldan iborat bo'lib, uchta blokka bo'lingan edi. Natijalar: O'tkazilgan so'rov SD bilan bog'liq masalalarni hal qilish bo'yicha shifokorlarning bilim va resurslaridagi jiddiy bo'shliqlarni aniqladi. Faqatgina 5% ishtirokchilar SD bo'yicha muhokamalarni o'tkazishda o'zlarini yetarli darajada bilimdon deb hisoblashgan, 95% esa jinsiy sog'liq haqida suhbatlarni kamdan-kam yoki hech qachon boshlamasliklarini aytishdi. Maxsus o'quv kurslari va resurslarning yetishmasligi 100% ishtirokchilar tomonidan asosiy to'siq sifatida ko'rsatilgan. 85% madaniy va ijtimoiy to'siqlarni, 75% esa vaqt va resurslarning yetishmasligini muhim muammo sifatida qayd etishdi. Shuningdek, 90% shifokorlar seksual tibbiyot bo'yicha sifatli ta'lim materiallari yetishmasligidan norozi ekanliklarini bildirishdi. Xulosa: SD bo'yicha bilim va ko'nikmalarga ega bo'lgan tibbiyot mutaxassislarini tayyorlash neurologik kasalliklarga chalingan ayollar uchun davolash natijalarini yaxshilaydi va ularning hayot sifatini oshiradi. Madaniy va ta'lim to'siqlarini bartaraf etish ushbu himoyaga muhtoj bemorlar uchun har tomonlama va samarali yordam ko'rsatish uchun juda muhimdir.

Kalit so'zlar: seksual disfunktsiyalar, neurologik kasalliklar, shifokorlarning xabardorligi, seksologiya, reabilitatsiya, hayot sifati.

## Relevance

The topic of sexual health impairments (SD) in women with neurological disorders is gaining increased attention within the global scientific and medical community [1]. Despite this growing interest, there remains a limited number of publications exploring the effects of neurological conditions on women's sexual function [2, 3, 4]. This scarcity of research can partly be attributed to cultural and societal taboos surrounding discussions of SD in certain countries [5, 6]. Some existing studies address SD within the context of religious and cultural norms, focusing on how these factors influence women with neurological disorders [7].

It is well-documented that individuals with neurological conditions often experience disruptions in physical and psychosocial functioning over time, including motor, cognitive, and sexual functions, with SD being a common concern [8]. The need to study SD in this population is particularly critical as approximately 70% of affected women remain capable of maintaining sexual activity [9]. Furthermore, sexual dissatisfaction and behavioral disorders related to SD significantly impact mental health and can lead to a profound sense of social isolation and disadvantage [10, 11].

Given these factors, it is essential to investigate and assess SD in women with neurological disorders to develop comprehensive rehabilitation programs aimed at restoring sexual function and improving their quality of life. Additionally, addressing SD is of paramount importance, as the psychological toll of sexual dysfunction often surpasses the physical limitations associated with the underlying neurological condition [10, 13].

Sexual dysfunctions (SD) in women with neurological disorders represent a significant issue that impacts their quality of life (QoL). Physicians working with this patient category require appropriate knowledge and skills to ensure effective diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. However, despite the importance of this topic, physicians' awareness of SD remains insufficient, primarily due to cultural, social, and educational barriers.

**The aim of this study** was to examine the level of knowledge, competence, and attitudes of physicians toward the diagnosis and treatment of SD in women with neurological disorders, as well as to identify their training needs in this area.

## Materials and Methods

The study aimed to evaluate physicians' awareness of diagnosing and managing sexual dysfunctions (SD) in patients with neurological disorders. To achieve this, a survey was conducted among 34 healthcare specialists, comprising 19 neurologists and 15 physicians specializing in physical therapy and rehabilitation. These specialists were chosen for their direct involvement in managing patients with neurological conditions that may impact sexual health.

The survey was carried out using a structured questionnaire, which was developed by the Department of Rehabilitology, Traditional Medicine, and Physical Education at Tashkent Medical Academy (TMA). The questionnaire was specifically designed to assess various aspects of the specialists' knowledge, competence, and challenges they face in addressing SD in their patients. It contained 14 questions divided into three thematic blocks:

1. **Block "A": Self-assessment of competence** This section focused on the physicians' confidence and competence in discussing sexual health and providing treatment for SD. Questions were aimed at gauging the frequency of initiating conversations about sexual health, perceived adequacy of knowledge, and confidence in treating SD in patients with neurological disorders.
2. **Block "B": Limitations and barriers** The second section explored the challenges and obstacles faced by specialists in diagnosing and managing SD. This included factors such as lack of training, cultural and social barriers, resource limitations, and time constraints.
3. **Block "C": Sources of information** The third section addressed the sources from which physicians obtained information about diagnosing and treating SD. It also examined the accessibility of reliable, up-to-date resources and the regularity of knowledge updates in the field of sexual medicine.

The participants were interviewed using this questionnaire, and the data collected provided insights into the current state of awareness and challenges faced by physicians in this domain. The demographic data revealed that the average age of the surveyed specialists was  $36 \pm 7$  years, with ages ranging from 26 to 51 years. The median work experience of the participants was 5 years, with a range of 1 to 21 years. This diversity in age and professional experience allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the perspectives and challenges across different career stages.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics of specialists surveyed**

| Indicator               | Mean $\pm$ SD / Median | Range | n  | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------|----|---------|---------|
| Age (years)             | 36 $\pm$ 7             | 26–51 | 34 | 26      | 51      |
| Work experience (years) | 5                      | 1–21  | 34 | 1       | 21      |

This demographic profile of the participants highlights a relatively young and early-career group of specialists, which may influence their perspectives and level of confidence in addressing sexual health issues in patients with neurological conditions. The structured nature of the questionnaire ensured that responses were systematically categorized, providing a clear understanding of the gaps in knowledge and barriers faced by these healthcare professionals.

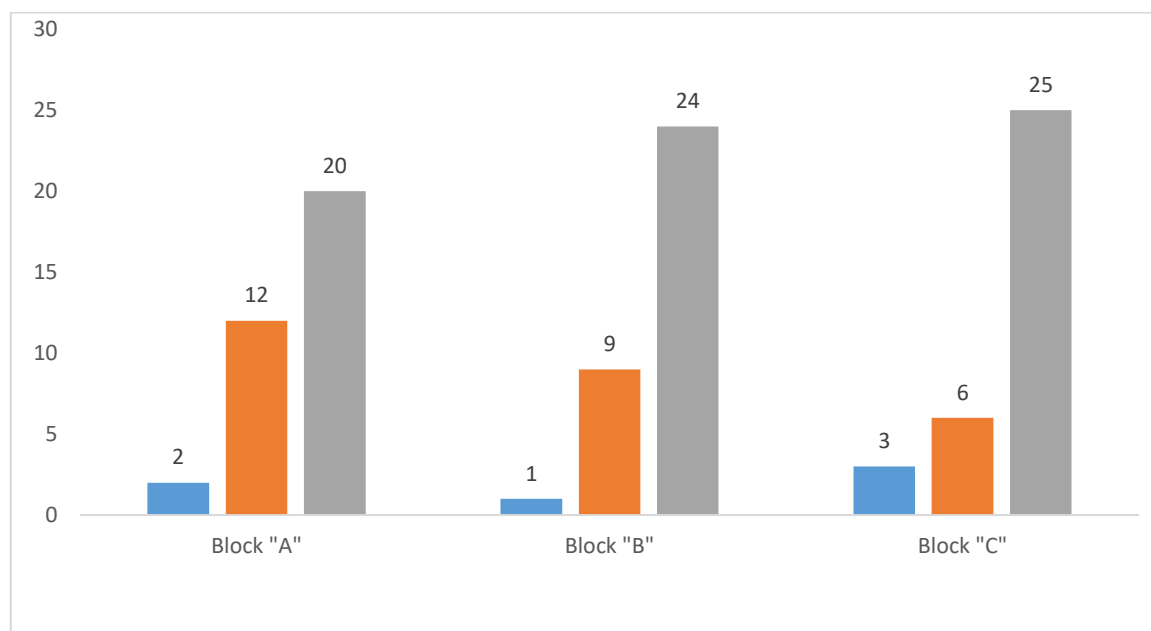
### Result and discussions

The findings highlight significant gaps in physicians' self-assessed competence, limitations, and sources of information regarding sexual dysfunctions (SD) in patients with neurological disorders. In **Block "A"**, which focused on self-assessment of competence, only 5% of physicians reported feeling sufficiently knowledgeable and confident in discussing sexual health issues with patients. A staggering 95% rarely or never initiated conversations about sexual problems, while 80% rated their understanding of SD as insufficient or unsatisfactory. Furthermore, over 90% of physicians admitted lacking confidence in treating SD in women with neurological conditions.

In **Block "B"**, which examined limitations and barriers, all participants (100%) identified a lack of specialized training and courses in sexology as a significant obstacle to effective diagnosis and treatment. Cultural and social barriers were also prominent, with 85% of physicians citing these factors as impediments to addressing sexual health concerns. Additionally, 75% of respondents noted that time constraints and limited resources posed considerable challenges to their ability to manage SD in their patients.

**Block "C"**, which explored sources of information, revealed that medical literature remains the primary resource for 60% of physicians. However, access to up-to-date materials on sexual medicine was reported as limited. Alarming, 90% of physicians expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of quality educational resources, and more than 80% highlighted the lack of regular updates in their knowledge of sexual medicine as a critical shortfall.

Together, these findings emphasize the urgent need for improved training programs, access to reliable resources, and strategies to overcome cultural and institutional barriers to enhance physicians' competence and confidence in addressing SD in patients with neurological disorders (pic. 1).



**Picture 1.** Awareness of Physicians on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Sexual Dysfunctions in Patients with Neurological Disorders

## Discussion

The results of the study emphasize a pressing need to improve physicians' knowledge and competence in diagnosing and managing sexual dysfunctions (SD) in women with neurological disorders. Despite the evident impact of SD on patients' quality of life (QoL) and mental health, several barriers prevent healthcare professionals from addressing these issues effectively. One of the most significant obstacles identified is the influence of cultural norms and societal expectations. In many regions, discussing sexual health is still considered a taboo subject, both for patients and healthcare providers. This cultural reticence creates a barrier to open communication, limiting the ability of physicians to inquire about or address SD. Female patients, in particular, may feel reluctant to raise such issues with their doctors due to fear of judgment or embarrassment. Physicians, on the other hand, may avoid initiating these conversations for fear of violating cultural norms or patient boundaries. Another major challenge highlighted by the study is the lack of comprehensive education and training in sexual medicine. The findings reveal that most physicians feel inadequately prepared to diagnose and treat SD, primarily due to the absence of specialized courses and resources in this area. This educational gap leaves healthcare providers without the necessary tools and confidence to address such issues effectively. Moreover, the limited availability of up-to-date materials and regular training opportunities further exacerbates this problem. The consequences of these barriers are significant. Sexual dysfunctions can profoundly affect women's mental health, leading to issues such as depression, anxiety, and a diminished sense of self-worth. For women with neurological disorders, who are already coping with physical disabilities and cognitive challenges, SD can further compound their struggles, creating a cycle of emotional and social isolation. These issues directly impact their overall quality of life, making it imperative for physicians to address them comprehensively. The lack of confidence among physicians is another critical factor impeding effective care. Many healthcare providers reported feeling unprepared or hesitant to discuss SD with their patients. This hesitation often results in missed opportunities for early diagnosis and intervention, leaving patients without the support they need to manage their condition. Furthermore, inadequate physician training can lead to a lack of awareness about the available diagnostic tools and treatment options, further limiting the quality of care provided.

## Conclusion

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. There is an urgent need to integrate sexual medicine into medical curricula and provide specialized training programs for healthcare professionals. Creating an open and supportive environment where both patients and physicians feel comfortable discussing sexual health issues is equally important. Public awareness campaigns and community outreach efforts can help to normalize conversations around sexual health, reducing the stigma associated with such topics.

Ultimately, empowering physicians with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to address SD in women with neurological disorders can significantly improve patient outcomes, enhancing their mental health and overall quality of life. By overcoming cultural and educational barriers, healthcare systems can ensure that women receive the comprehensive care they need and deserve.

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