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Sex on the brain! Hypersexuality, a diagnosis to reveal or conceal?

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Abstract

Addiction specialists have known for decades that sexual addiction is real, very powerful and creates a strong enough reaction in the brain to be compared to heroin addiction. The hallmark symptoms are the inability to control urges for the sexual behavior, even when the consequences are known to be tragic or negative. It is progressive and the person needs more and more of the encounters to reach a point of desired numbness or escape. The media coined the term porn and sex addiction, and the debate was well underway. The forthcoming DSM–5 refers to Hypersexuality. Is Hypersexuality a real diagnosis or an excuse for bad behavior? Is it just a moral failing on the part of the person? In the mean time those living with the addiction describe the feeling as shameful, hopeless and desperate, and not connected to pleasure. Stigma and labeling prevents desperate sufferers to seek help and recovery. The variety and sheer amounts of sexual material pushed into the public arena across multiple formats (internet, television, social media, games, books and movies) could be a factor in the rising numbers of people living with Hypersexual disorder. Interestingly enough, trends show also the opposite effect-the loss of sexual interest with real-life partners and deep sexual dissatisfaction for actual physical encounters. With one in seventeen adults estimated to meet the criteria for Hypersexuality disorder, Clinicians are sure to be presented with this disorder at some point. While traditional psychotherapy is very useful with most mental health concerns, addiction, sexual addiction in particular, needs a skill-specific clinician trained to ask the most useful assessment questions to enable a better understanding of the situation. As with most substance and process addictions, the therapist often has to confront denial and move the client into sexual and relationship health. Clients can be referred for short-term work with an addiction expert. This can occur at an inpatient addiction treatment facility or an intensive outpatient setting. During this seminar we will contextualize Hypersexuality and explore the most current treatment recommendations and guidelines.

Biography

Sorika de Swardt is a social worker with eighteen year's experience. She holds a BA degree in Social Work (1995) a MA degree in Psychology (2001) which she acquired in South Africa. She is currently enrolled for a Doctorate degree in Psychology. She specialized in the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2007 in Mental Health and Forensic Dual Diagnosis. There she developed a Dual Diagnosis in-patient service in a Forensic, as well as the "Choose Life" training program which was nominated in 2005 for the NIHME Quality awards in England. She lectured on the Mental Health Act and Dual Diagnosis subjects to Post Qualified Health and Social Workers at Essex University. The outcome was made into a short educational film by Arklight Media, of which Sorika was the clinical producer. This DVD won the Silver Quality in-service training for nursing staff and care workers at Vista Clinic. Trust award in 2007 as part of a training package. In March 2007, Sorika and her family returned to South Africa where she practiced as Assistant Director for the NG Ministry of Caring, involved in Training, Psychometric Evaluation and Therapeutic Services. She presented at the 3rd MEISA World Congress in 2010 and the South African National SAPSAC congress in 2010. Whilst in South Africa she still frequented the UK to offer dual diagnosis training and in 2009 developed an online e-learning package for the South Essex NHS University Trust in regards to dual diagnosis. In 2012 she was sourced by a private wellness unit in Namibia, to train their professional staff on addiction and dual diagnosis. Currently Sorika practice as Private Practitioner rendering services at psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitation centre's and is part of the marketing team at Elim Clinic Professional Addiction Treatment Centre. Her research interest centers around Hypersexuality, porn and internet addiction.

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