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DS-1001 Bad Data Science Extra Credit

Links:

1. <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0277967>
2. <https://www.barstoolsports.com/blog/3449557/study-shows-that-horny-adults-live-longer-lives>
3. <https://nypost.com/2022/12/19/not-being-horny-enough-can-lead-to-an-early-death-study/>

I have provided 3 links. The first is to study conducted by Yamagata University on the association between lack of sexual and all cause-mortality. The next three are different articles that cover the story.

First lets look at the study. This study was conducted by Yamagata University which is a major Japanese national university. It was an observational diary study on the health care outcomes of about 20,000 Japanese adults over 40 in a small prefecture over the course of 7 years. It found that males who reported lower libidos had high overall mortality rates, even when controlling for factors such as BMI, past alcohol use, depression and sex, but could not find the same link in woman. The majority of the study is focused on understanding the association between sexual and health outcomes, and only once in the discussion section to they mention the possibility of a causal link. Further, when mentioning causality, they are careful to say that there may be further potential confounds. This study notes that it studies individuals in a small Japanese town and thus does not necessarily generalize.

The first article, I liked is too Barstool sports. I find it fascinating because despite being very short it completely mischaracterizes the study its self, the goals of the study, and another article covering the study. This article is effectively just a titrate, about how the author thinks this study was done as click bait, the characterize a reader of the study as thinking “…If being horny is going to make me live longer, I'll snort a gas station dick pill every morning before I leave for work.” Misunderstanding that the study, only very briefly posed a casual link.

Another interesting quote is,

“But no, that's bullshit. You didn't discover shit, Japan. Just think about what this study is actually saying. It's the most obvious conclusion of all time. I don't know a lot about anything, but one thing I do know is that a good sex drive is the sign of a healthy adult. Healthy adults live longer. The 25-year old man who takes multi-vitamins and works out 5 times a week is more likely to have a healthy sex drive than the 30 year old blogger who adheres to a strict diet of Five Guys and Strawberry Banana Vape. Guess which person is going to live longer? A good sex drive is a result of being healthy, not a cause of it…” the author is completely mischaracterizing both the population being studied and the analysis done. The study was by design just run on people over 40, and the analysis was conducted directly to control for many factors including age, BMI and tobacco use which are all mentioned in this quote.

“This stupid Japanese University took the time to study 20,000 subjects …. Whenever Yamagata University started this study, they knew exactly what the results would be.… the entire goal of this study was to publish a horny headline that would get picked up by a publication like the NY Post” While the author is probably not wrong, that there is some research that is conducted for the purpose of getting media attention, I don’t think this study is one of them. This study was done by a Japanese nursing university, and one of there main qualitative conclusions, was that Japan should liberalize its view on sex to promote health care outcomes. I think it is more than likely that this publicly funded Japanese University nursing department cares about Japanese health care outcomes. Japan in specific has reason to be interested in older people who are not having sex. Both of these are large issues, as the Japanese population overall is rapidly ageing, young people are having less sex. It is possible that for cultural reasons, this study might actually be critical to public health outcomes for the population it was meant to study.

The final things that are worth noting about this article, are that they never mention the actual limitations of the finding of the study, and they drag another article that actually seemed to understand the study. So firstly, they never mention that this study was just conducted on adults over 40 in a small Japanese prefecture and that is a main reason why the results should not be taking as general. Next, the article starts off by referencing, another article covering this study by the Washington post (link 3). The article claims that the Washington post, effectively just wrote the story for a title. I would however note, that while this may be true, the two articles have almost the exact same title, and the Washington post article, actually discusses the study and it’s limitations. So this article in it’s effort to lambast, the Washington Post having this title while having no real substance, produces an article with a near identical title and I would argue substantially less substance. So in short I think this is a bad article in every sense of the word. It has bad data science, it is written poorly, and it is done in bad faith.