

ISSWSH/ISSM 2025
Atlanta, GA
March 1, 2025

Sarah Ponce, BS, BA
MD MPH Student
Keck School of Medicine of USC

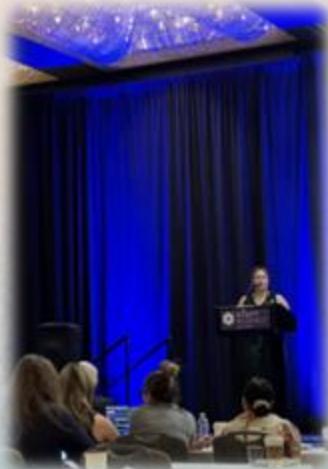
The Future of Sexual Medicine



Disclosures

None

My 'disclosures'





Objectives

- ★ Apply innovative frameworks to integrate patient advocate voices into the development of sexual medicine research, education, and policy, emphasizing their unique contributions to advancing care.
- ★ Identify targeted strategies to recruit, mentor, and retain a diverse sexual medicine workforce, addressing systemic barriers and fostering equity within the field.
- ★ Integrate female sexual function into medical training across specialties and subspecialties, dismantling gender-based stereotypes and expanding the perceived scope of practice for sexual medicine.
- ★ Illustrate the role of community health programs in fostering inclusive dialogues around sexual health, addressing the impacts of stigma, delayed diagnoses, and medical gaslighting on patient outcomes.



The Future of Sexual Medicine is

Objective
Gender-expansive
Patient-centered
Widespread

Future sexual medicine education

★ Objective

Pharmacology

Anatomical diagrams

Contemporary

★ Gender expansive

De-centering gender binaries

Apply innovative topics across
biological sex

★ Patient-centered

Biopsychosocial approach

Patient experiences

Trauma-informed

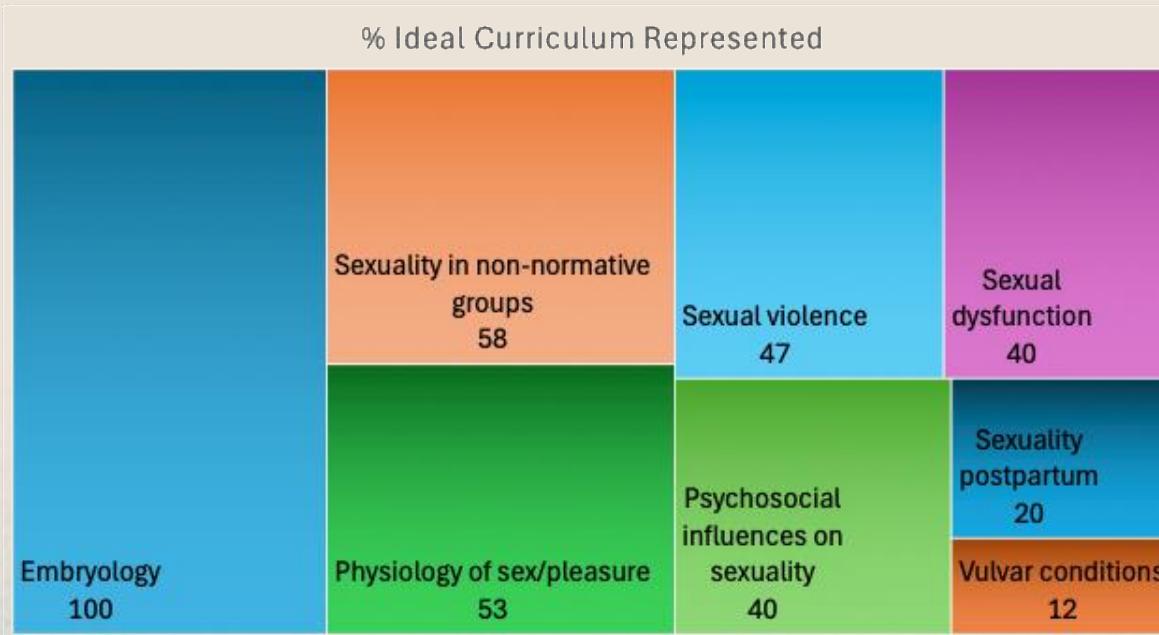
★ Widespread

Pre-clerkship + clerkship

Programs & electives

In the community

Undergraduate sexual medicine education: Northeast USA



According to World Association for Sexual Health & ISSM recommendations for an ideal sexual health curriculum



Across 16 Canadian medical schools:

Any mention of

Diagnosis and treatment of diseases and conditions
that affect **women's emotional and physical
wellbeing**

Or

considerations when **delivering or supporting the
care of women** for any health issue

Or

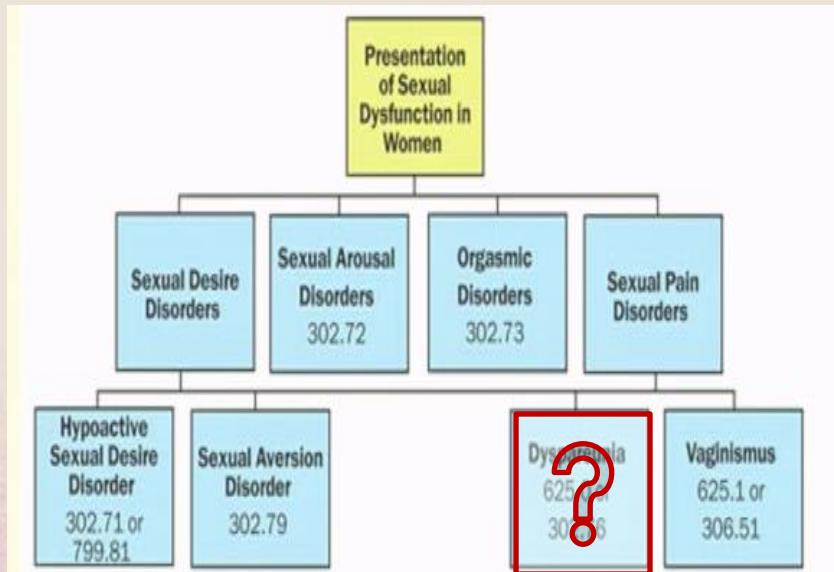
Sex and gender identity

Or

Determinants of health

**Was present in 0-37% of public
documents**

What about sexual pain disorders?

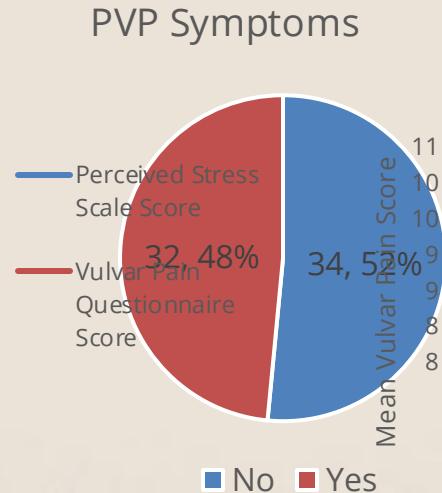




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Patient Perspectives: Pelvic and Vulvovaginal Pain

Vulvar conditions
12



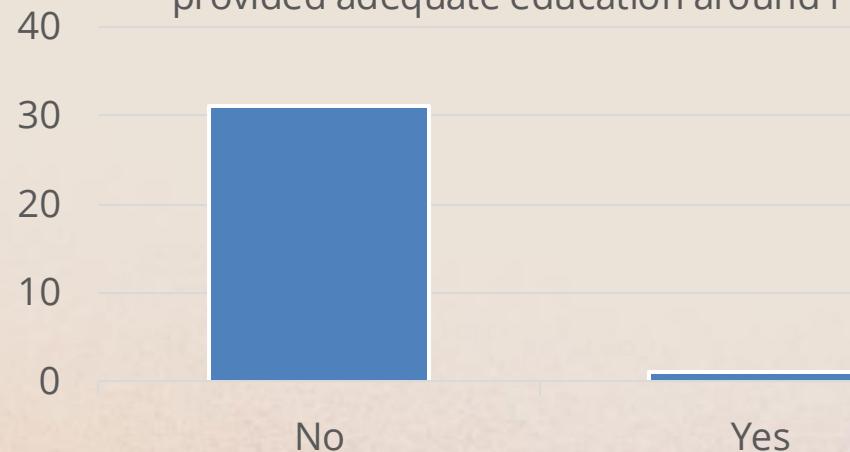
VPQ score and interference on medical duties



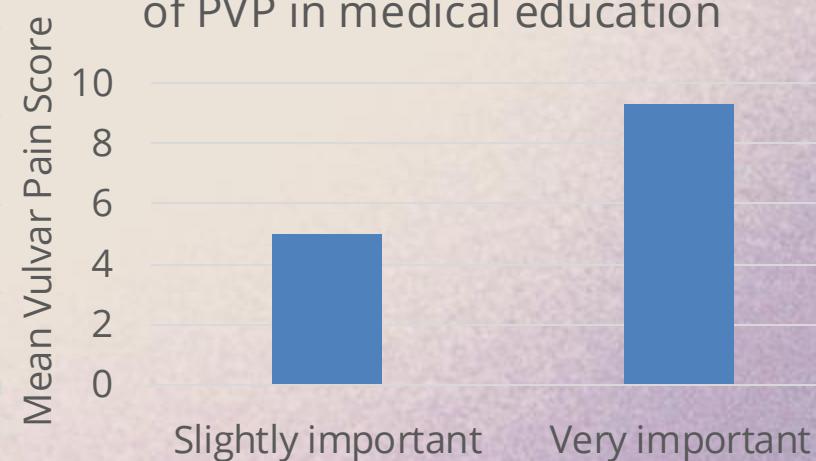
Does your pelvic/vulvovaginal pain interfere with your duties as a medical trainee?

Patient Perspectives: Pelvic and Vulvovaginal Pain

Has your current medical training program provided adequate education around PVP?



Mean VPQ score and importance of PVP in medical education



Why haven't you sought treatment?

"Unsure if it's real or constitutes a diagnosis"

"Maybe there's a psychological component"



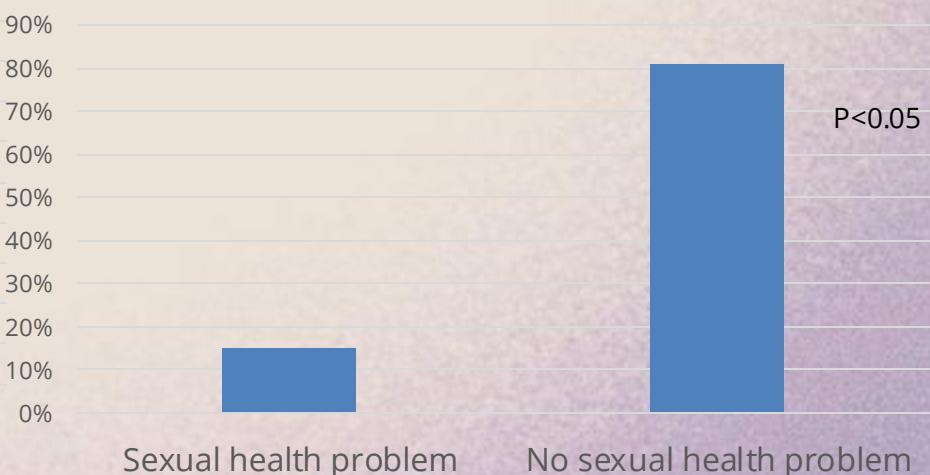
Future doctors can find treatment
& treat their patients

Well-managed future doctors, Well-managed future patients

Comfort optimizing sexual function



Comfort optimizing sexual function



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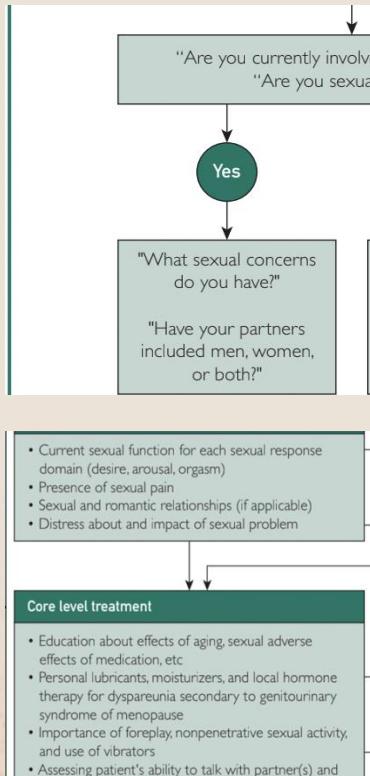
★ Widespread

Pre-clerkship + clerkship

Programs & electives

In the community

Keck Primary Care Program Sexual Health Training



1. Identifiers
2. Sexual acts/practices
3. Partners
4. STI risk assessment
5. Pregnancy risk assessment/protection
6. Safety assessment
7. Sexual function (est. 2022)



SEXUAL MEDICINE AWARENESS WEEK

AT KECK SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



MONDAY 9/19



Overview of Sexual
Medicine w/
Dr. Goldstein + Dr. Yee

TUESDAY 9/20



Patient Panel: Living
with Vestibulodynia
MCH 249

WEDNESDAY 9/21



A Discussion on
Medical Gaslighting w/
Dr. Maria Uloko

THURSDAY 9/22



Sexual Health Training:
Dr. Isabel Edge and
Sarah Ponce

FRIDAY 9/23



Physical Therapy for
Sexual Function w/ Kelsie
Kaiser, DPT and USC PT

Learn about the role of sexual function
on quality of life and overall health

A collaboration between Urology SIG at USC, The KSOM Primary Care Program, San Diego Sexual Medicine, and The Medical Student Forum on Female Sexual Medicine

The

SWIUDENTS JOURNAL CLUB HISTORICAL CONTEXT

DECEMBER 17TH, 8 PM EST



FEATURED MODERATOR
DR. UNA LEE
ARTICLES

PETERS, B., ET AL. (2023). CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE HISTORICAL, MEDICAL, AND SOCIAL NEGLECT OF THE CLITORIS. JOURNAL OF SEXUAL MEDICINE, 20(4), 418–421.

POPAT, S., ET AL. (2023). "VAGINA" IS NOT A BAD WORD:

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CENSORSHIP OF THE WORD

VAGINA. JOURNAL OF UROLOGY, 193, 2023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9777221/>

1 female respondent to 7 male respondents

3 female applicants to 4 male applicants matched in Urology 2025 (Urology Times)

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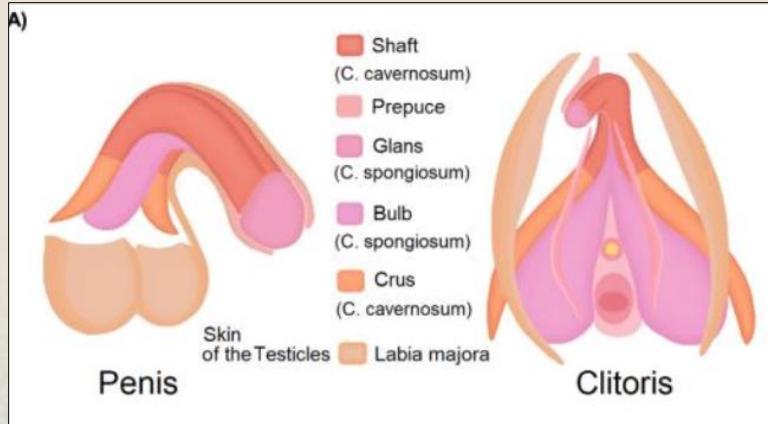
Pre-clerkship + clerkship

Programs & electives

In the community

Gender-Expansive Erectile Physiology

Undergraduate medical education contains 2x physiology of penile erection than clitoral engorgement (Milazzo, et al 2024)

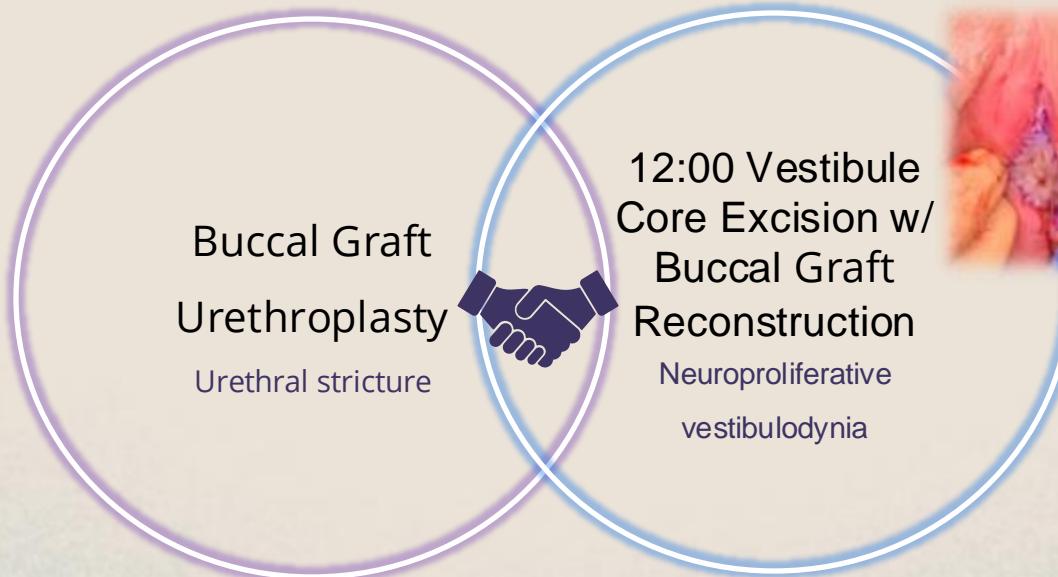


“...vascular evaluation of the clitoris with ultrasound as a potential marker of forthcoming **cardiovascular risk** in females..”

The ESSM Female Ultrasound School 2025 will be on Nov 13-14,
Budapest, Hungary
Online registration opens in March 2025

1. Greenwald L, Dickstein DR, Chubak B, Marshall DC. We all get erections - de-gendering sexual arousal dysfunction in the ICD. *Nat Rev Urol*. 2024;21(6):319–320. doi:10.1038/s41585-024-00890-y.
2. Maseroli E, Vignozzi L, Reisman Y. Clitoris color Doppler ultrasound: a 2023 update. *J Sex Med*. 2023;20(12):1367–1368. doi:10.1093/jsxmed/qdad140.

Gender-Expansive Surgical Management



Courtesy of
Alyssa Yee, MD

1. Yee, I Goldstein, (089) Regional Vestibulectomy and Buccal Mucosal Graft Reconstruction for Refractory Neoproliferative Vestibulodynia, *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, Volume 20, Issue Supplement_2, May 2023, qdad061.085, <https://doi-org.libproxy2.usc.edu/10.1093/jsxmed/qdad061.085>
2. Horiguchi A. Substitution urethroplasty using oral mucosa graft for male anterior urethral stricture disease: Current topics and reviews. *International journal of urology*. 2017;24(7):493-503. doi:10.1111/iju.13356

Gender-Expansive Hormones

FtM on 100 mg Testoviron depot IM q7-10 days

Vaginal thickness was **2/3** (μm) that of premenopausal cisgender females ($p<.01$)

Vaginal tissue expressed **60% less estrogen receptors** than premenopausal cis females ($p<.01$)



Transgender men and gender diverse AFAB individuals on testosterone have more **vaginal pain/discomfort during sexual activity** (Tordoff 2023) and may benefit from vaginal estrogen

More research is needed!

1. Baldassarre M, Giannone FA, Foschini MP, et al. Effects of long-term high-dose testosterone administration on vaginal epithelium structure and estrogen receptor- α and - β expression of young women. *Int J Impot Res.* 2013;25(5):172-177. doi:10.1038/ijir.2013.9.
2. Tordoff DM, Lunn MR, Chen B, et al. Testosterone use and sexual function among transgender men and gender diverse people assigned female at birth. *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2023;229(6):669.e1-669.e17. doi:10.1016/j.ajog.2023.08.035.



Gender-Expansive Hormones

Practice Guideline

> J Clin Endocrinol Metab. 2019 Oct 1;104(10):4660-4666.

doi: 10.1210/jc.2019-01603.

Global Consensus Position Statement on the Use of Testosterone Therapy for Women



Susan R Davis ^{1 2}, Rodney Baber ^{3 2 4}, Nicholas Panay ^{5 2}, Johannes Bitzer ^{6 7},
Sonia Cerdas Perez ^{8 9}, Rakibul M Islam ^{1 2}, Andrew M Kaunitz ^{10 11},
Sheryl A Kingsberg ^{12 13}, Irene Lambrinoudaki ^{14 15}, James Liu ^{16 11},
Sharon J Parish ^{17 18}, JoAnn Pinkerton ^{19 13}, Janice Rymer ^{20 21},
James A Simon ^{22 23 18}, Linda Vignozzi ^{24 25 7}, Margaret E Wierman ^{26 27}

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 31498871 PMCID: PMC6821450 DOI: 10.1210/jc.2019-01603



Gender-Expansive Research

1. Collect data on trans + nonbinary identities using validated + recommended methods
2. Report disaggregated data
3. Acknowledge limitations of data
4. Use trans-inclusive language that does not conflate sex assigned at birth + gender
5. Engage with trans and nonbinary communities

Question 1: What is your gender identity?

- Cisgender man*
 - Cisgender woman*
 - Genderqueer
 - Gender Nonconforming
 - Nonbinary
 - Transgender Man/Trans man
 - Transgender woman/ Trans woman
 - Two-Spirit
 - Additional category, please specify ____
 - Decline to answer
- *Cisgender refers to those whose gender identity aligns with sex assigned at birth

Question 2. What was your sex assigned at birth?

- Female
- Male
- Intersex
- Decline to answer

Tordoff, D. , Minalga, B. , Gross, B. , Martin, A. , Caracciolo, B. , Barbee, L. , Balkus, J. & Khosropour, C. (2022). Erasure and Health Equity Implications of Using Binary Male/Female Categories in Sexual Health Research and Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Sexually Transmitted Infection Surveillance: Recommendations for Transgender-Inclusive Data Collection and Reporting. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, 49 (2), e45-e49. doi: 10.1097/OLQ.0000000000001533.

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Programs & electives

In the community



Patient Voices in Education

Tight Lipped ObGyn Residency Campaign



CREOG

- Patient panel
- Pudendal neuralgia and entrapment
- Hormonally mediated vestibulodynia



Our founder & program partners

- Pelvic floor assessment workshop
- Clitorodynia
- Dermatoses



Dr. Uloko at LAG-USC

Vulvodynia: Hispanic/Latinx Populations

In a sample of 2,053 women in USA, between White, Black/African-American, Hispanic, and Other races, Hispanic individuals have the highest prevalence of vulvodynia (15%)¹⁹

Patient initiation

Spanish-speaking patients less likely to initiate discussion on painful sex,¹⁹ & have higher suspicion of doctors²⁰

Suspicion is warranted

Suspicion in Hispanic patients with vulvovaginal pain associated with longer time to/seeing more doctors before diagnosis, perceiving discrimination, & negative health care experiences²⁰

Provider initiation

Clinicians less likely to bring up sexual concerns with Spanish-speaking patients²⁰

Poorer outcomes

This leads to more dysfunction¹⁹ & avoidance of pelvic exams in Spanish-speaking patients²⁰

Vulvodynia: Hispanic/Latinx Populations

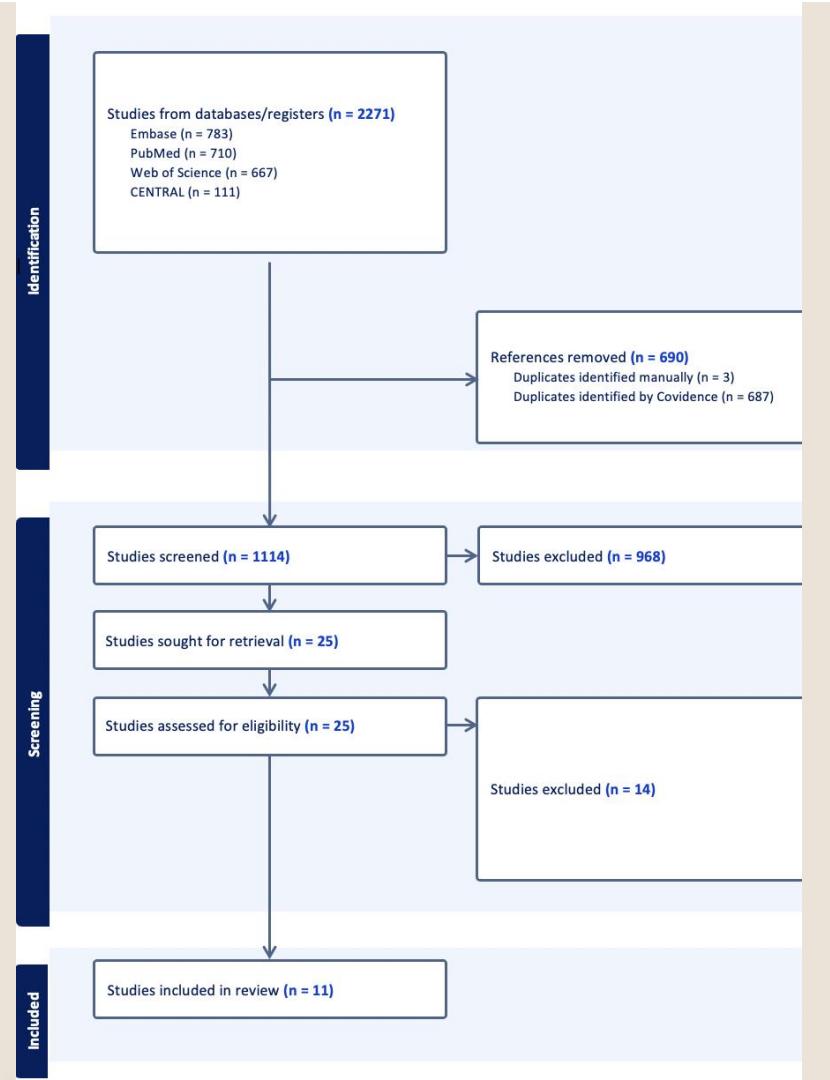
Vulvodynia

- GSM (excluding vaginal sx)
- Vestibulodynia
- Vulvodynia
- Clitorodynia
- Vulvar Dermatoses

Total Included Studies

- 9 Studies in the United States
- 2 in Latin America

*Not yet published





Reproductive Health

PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

DEFENDING WOMEN FROM GENDER IDEOLOGY EXTREMISM AND RESTORING BIOLOGICAL TRUTH TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

EXECUTIVE ORDER

January 20, 2025

PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

ENDING ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION AND RESTORING MERIT-BASED OPPORTUNITY

January 21, 2025

PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM CHEMICAL AND SURGICAL MUTILATION

EXECUTIVE ORDER

January 28, 2025

PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

ENDING RADICAL AND WASTEFUL GOVERNMENT DEI PROGRAMS AND PREFERENCING

EXECUTIVE ORDER

January 20, 2025

Services, and places of worship under Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy

Who Promotes Health Equity?

Who Promotes Health Equity?



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Paving the Road to Health Equity*. CDC. Accessed February 18, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/health-equity/what-is/paving-the-road-to-health-equity.html>.



We promote health equity.

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Programs & electives

In the community

Sexuality Workshops in South Asian Women

Multimodal group education

- Orgasm gap in heterosexuals
- Pelvic/Vulvar Anatomy and Kegel exercise training
- Self-love and masturbation techniques
- Mindfulness, positive body image, changing sexual script
- Sexual communication role play, assertiveness, promotion of one's orgasm
- Brochure
 - ↑ Sexual function (FSFI)
 - ↑ Sexual assertiveness (SAQ)

Sexuality Workshops in South Asian Women

“Now, I feel more in control and feel less shame in seeking orgasm from my partner.”

“I wish I had learned about all this 20 years ago!”

“It is my right to prioritize myself and my pleasure.”

“Thank you for doing this and being so courageous in talking about women’s orgasms!”



The Pelvic Health Workshop



Part I: Pelvic Health Education + Empowerment

Discussion-based education, right to pleasure and pain-free life, storytelling

Part II: Pelvic Floor PT

Educational slides on pelvic floor anatomy, conditions, demonstration and practice of non-invasive pelvic floor PT exercises

The Pelvic Health Workshop

Focus group analysis

Motives for joining

- Gain knowledge
- Share knowledge



Conditions

- GSM
- Pain with pelvic exams
- Pelvic organ prolapse
- Urinary incontinence
- History of gyn cancer

Characteristics

- Spanish-speaking from Latin-American countries
- Predominantly Mexico
- Sociocultural stigma
- Wellness Center regulars
- 2 hr bus commute to receive free services

The Pelvic Health Workshop

Benefits

Focus group results

- Knowledge of conditions & anatomy
- Comfort speaking to doctors about symptoms
 - Leading to evaluation, referrals, diagnoses
 - Asking for smaller speculum
 - Discussions around sexual function
- Pelvic floor exercises
 - Symptom improvement
 - Sexual function
 - Incontinence
 - Musculoskeletal pain



Empower Your Health: Free Workshop on Pelvic Floor Wellness

Join our free community workshop, open to both women and men, to explore the vital role of pelvic floor health in overall wellness.

Discover essential insights into how pelvic floor health impacts your entire body.

This workshop will empower you with:

- Understanding Pelvic Floor Basics: Learn what the pelvic floor is and why it matters.
- Identifying Key Symptoms: Recognize signs of pelvic floor dysfunction and their effects on daily life.
- Improving Body Alignment & Strength: Discover exercises and habits to support lifelong pelvic health.
- Achieving Wellness Goals: Gain practical tools for enhancing physical wellness and confidence.





Sexual Empowerment for Black Women with Sexual Pain

Future community intervention

Sexuality Research and Social Policy (2024) 21:1391–1405
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-023-00908-x>

Listen to Black Women: The Power of Black Women's Collective Sexual Wisdom About Strategies to Promote Sexual Pleasure and Reduce Sexual Pain

Shemeka Thorpe¹  · Samuella Ware² · Natalie Malone³ · Jardin Dogan-Dixon⁴ · Candice N. Hargons³

Accepted: 21 November 2023 / Published online: 13 December 2023

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- Intergenerational education
- Community-building
- Representation of Black sex experts, Black scientists, Black community leaders
- Union of sex & religion
- Bodily autonomy & boundaries
- Healthy masculinity and educating men



EQUAL RIGHTS
to
PLEASURABLE &
PAIN-FREE LIVES

Thank you!

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4. Anderson NN, Gagliardi AR. Medical student exposure to women's health concepts and practices: a content analysis of curriculum at Canadian medical schools. *BMC Med Educ.* 2021;21(1):435. doi:10.1186/s12909-021-02873-8.
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6. Lee MW, Cox K, Davis SD, Nguyen BT. The association between gynecologic healthcare providers' sexual health and their comfort discussing their patients' sexual function. *Sex Reprod Healthc.* 2024;41:100996. doi:10.1016/j.srhc.2024.100996.
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12. Horiguchi A. Substitution urethroplasty using oral mucosa graft for male anterior urethral stricture disease: Current topics and reviews. *Int J Urol.* 2017;24(7):493–503. doi:10.1111/iju.13356.

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