

A Survey of Pharmacist and Nurse Views Regarding Sexual Well-being of Cancer Patients

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Introduction

Sexual well-being can be defined as a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality⁽¹⁾. Cancer and cancer treatment can have a profound effect on a person's sexual well-being. Cancer Pharmacists and Nurses are well placed in UK-based services to give practical advice and support to cancer patients.

There are no national guidelines in the United Kingdom (UK) available for addressing the management of cancer patients' sexual well-being, except within specific reproductive organ cancers.

A study has previously been undertaken in Canada⁽²⁾ focussing on pharmacist perceptions on cancer patient sexual health. There is no published research in this area in the UK. This survey aims to explore cancer pharmacist and nurse management of cancer patients' sexual well-being and perceived barriers to this.

Methods

An electronic respondent-driven survey was distributed to all cancer pharmacists and nurses at a single tertiary care centre. Anonymised responses were collated and analysed.

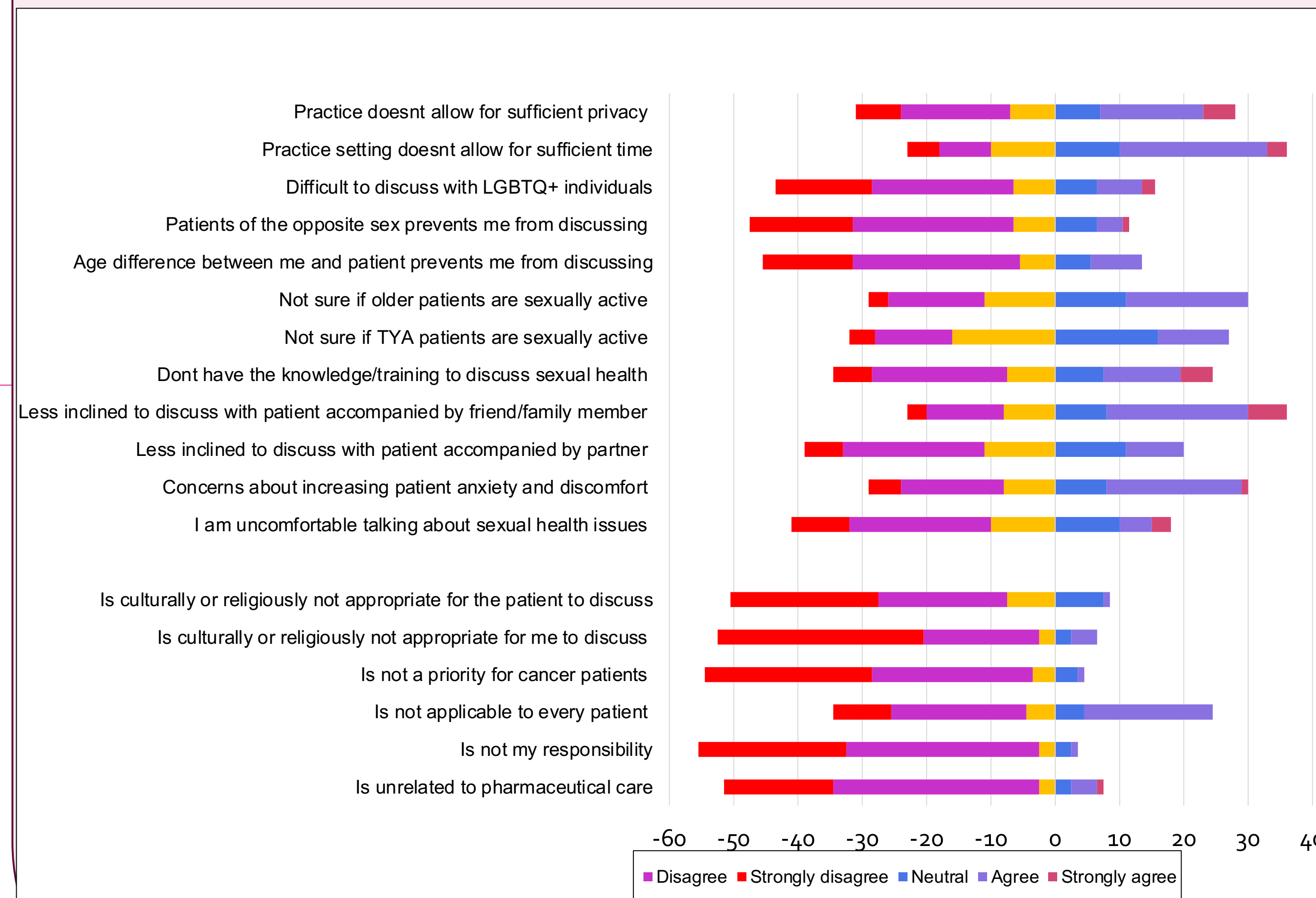
Results

Respondent Role	
Pharmacist	40.7%
Clinical Nurse Specialist	23.7%
Chemotherapy Nurse	28.8%
Research Nurse	6.8%
Respondent Years Experience	
<5 years	35.6%
5-10 years	22.0%
10+ years	42.4%
Respondent Gender	
Female	79.7%
Male	20.3%

Table 1. Respondent Demographics (n = 59)

59 responses were received. All respondents felt it was moderately important, important or very important to address cancer patient sexual well-being care and concerns.

Figure 1. Respondent Feeling and Perceptions towards Barriers to Discussing Cancer Patient Sexual Well-being



Previous Training Received for Care of Cancer Patient Sexual Well-being

Formal (courses, presentations, conferences, guidelines, primary literature)	20.3%
Informal (at work, colleague, self-directed learning)	54.2%
None	25.4%

Table 2. Respondent Training

Discussion

In this experienced cohort, sexual well-being discussions were deemed important, however, a significant proportion of respondents reported lacking the competence and knowledge to initiate these discussions.

The majority of respondents felt the responsibility of conducting sexual well-being discussions should be shared across the multidisciplinary team. However, there was a lack of clarity on who is undertaking this and when optimal timing of these discussions should be.

Barriers identified in the survey will need to be addressed to improve management of sexual well-being in cancer patients. This will require national consensus, targeted pharmacist and nurse training and additional resource.

Future plans include conducting a national survey, patient focus groups and incorporating formal training into cancer pharmacist and nurse training programmes.

References

1. Macmillan Cancer Support. (2019). Sex and cancer. [Online]. Cancer information and support. Last Updated: 30th June 2019. Available at: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/sex-and-cancer> [Accessed 29 June 2023].
2. Alisha Shivji, Melanie Danilak, Reanne Booker, Deonne Dersch-Mills, Suni. (2022). Pharmacists' practices and views regarding management of sexual health in patients with cancer. J Oncol Pharm Practice. pp.1-21.