

Sexual Medicine: A New Medical Specialty

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I hesitate to write this article. I neither consider myself an activist nor want to call attention to myself. My goal is to be known as a competent internist who takes excellent care of his patients. My "activism" is just a tool necessary to provide care for my patients.

I have a particular interest in sexual medicine, i.e., the intersection of sexuality and medicine. It includes the care and treatment of medical problems resulting from one's sexual interests, sexual problems resulting from medical or surgical treatments and the medical evaluation and treatment of sexual concerns. It also includes the general medical care of sexual minority patients. By sexual minorities, I mean all those who have sex with someone other than their legal spouse in the "missionary position." This includes, but is not limited to, those that define themselves as gay, transgendered, fetishists, transvestites, swingers, polyamorists, transsexuals, bisexuals, kinky and sadomasochists. I have become deeply committed to providing care to this segment of the population.

So how did I get involved in all this? Before I attended medical school, I had at least two other careers: At various times, I was a social worker and a sexologist. Actually, I still consider myself both a social worker and sexologist, in addition to being a physician. My social

work training gave me a profound sense of the barriers that minorities must overcome in everyday life. My training as a sexologist focused those concerns on the specific problems and barriers that sexual minorities face. I also became aware of the extreme discomfort that sexual issues engender in some healthcare providers. My patients often report in their histories that traditional medicine has been hostile to them, that they were just too embarrassed to seek care, or that the physician was too embarrassed to provide the care.

I am quite fortunate to practice in San Francisco, where there are many other sensitive and concerned physicians. I completed my internal medicine residency locally at St. Mary's Medical Center, where my interests were not just tolerated, but encouraged. After graduating and joining the medical staff, they listed me in their directory as a specialist in internal medicine and sexual medicine, without my even requesting it. I also practice at California Pacific Medical Center, where they have also been quite supportive.

My activism is expressed in several ways. I am on the editorial board of *San Francisco Medicine*, where my concerns have been heard and appreciated. I have written a book, *Health Care Without Shame* (1999), which is a manual for both patients and providers on how to provide sex-positive healthcare. I have been an

outspoken critic of those who still automatically see sexual minority patients as having a mental disorder.

I have attempted to live my principles in my own practice as an internist. My staff and forms are sexually positive and friendly. I am often invited by various sexual-minority support groups to do "Ask the Doctor" nights. I continue to research sexual minorities, so that our views of them are based on science rather than myth. I have published more scientific articles on S/M (sodomasochism) and its practitioners than anyone else. I frequently provide free medical care or consultation to indigent S/M patients.

My most ambitious (and still unrealized) goal is to create the American College of Sexual Medicine and Health (ACSMH), an organization by and for physicians interested in the intersection of medicine and sexuality. Please feel free to review the ACSMH website and my CV at the URLs below. Perhaps some of you would like to help make the ACSMH a reality. If so, please feel free to contact me at docx2@ix.netcom.com/ACSMH: <http://pweb.netcom.com/~docx2/ACSMH.html>

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