

Sex and intimacy

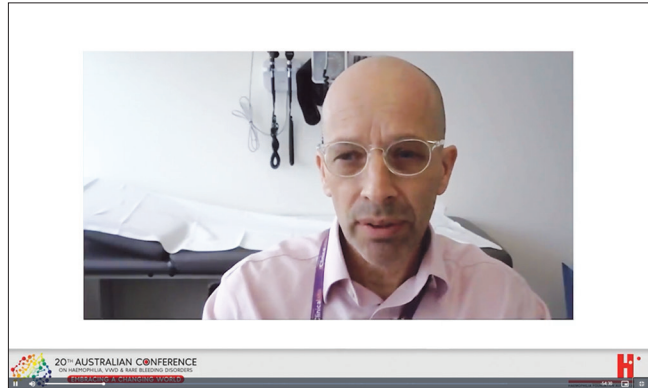
Jaime Chase

Sex, sexuality and intimacy

Chair ~ Scott Russell

Awkward conversations: talking about sex and intimacy ~ Simone Sheridan

Panel discussion ~ A/Prof Chris Barnes, Alex Coombs, Penny McCarthy, Scott Russell, Simone Sheridan



A/Prof Chris Barnes in the panel discussion

Simone Sheridan (Sexual Health Nurse Consultant at Austin Health) introduced the session with a fascinating and thought-provoking presentation about the importance of sex and intimacy within a chronic disease environment.

Some takeaway points from this presentation included:

- Normalise the discussion around sex and intimacy.
- Acknowledge the importance of sexual health and wellbeing and know its importance!
- For patients - choose a health professional that you are comfortable with and write your questions down (it's very easy to forget).
- Manage expectations of the 'ideal' sexual experience - think outside the box, if required.
- Sometimes younger people may find it difficult to describe what they mean - they need help from a trusted healthcare provider to find the right words to use.
- Teach body autonomy and the importance of consent early to children as they pass through the healthcare system.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion touched on a lot of the fears and queries that people with bleeding disorders have around sex and intimacy. All agreed on the importance of being able to be open around your healthcare providers and be honest with your questions and answers. The staff at your Haemophilia Treatment Centre are not embarrassed by any question that you ask them - so please ask!

The panel discussed common bleeding issues during sex and appropriate ways to mitigate these risks,

and how to treat or manage these bleeds if required. An aspect of this was young people's needs when exploring their bodies and the importance of exploring your body in a safe manner to decrease any risks. With the type of treatment that people have access to today, sexual activity is much safer and better covered than it ever has been before.

Disclosing your bleeding disorder was discussed at length - how you are going to bring up the conversation, how to frame it and what to say. A valuable suggestion was to practice it first in front of a mirror and see how you feel about what you are going to say. Planning always helps!

The approach to sexuality has changed immensely in the last 10 to 15 years and the panel reflected on the impact for people with bleeding disorders during these changing times.

Further resources include:

World Federation of Hemophilia - Ask Me Anything: Intimacy and bleeding disorders (video resources, 2021) - <https://elearning.wfh.org/resource/ask-me-anything-intimacy-and-bleeding-disorders/>

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