

Cardiovascular disease and sexual behavior: is it still rude to talk about this?

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KEYWORDS: cardiovascular disease, patient education, sexual dysfunction.

CITATION: Cardiol Croat. 2022;17(9-10):245. | <https://doi.org/10.15836/ccar2022.245>

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Introduction: The burden of cardiovascular disease on both the healthcare system and patients' quality of life is a topic that has been discussed and researched a lot through the years, in part owing to the transition from a strictly mechanistic approach to disease to a biopsychosocial one that incorporates many different factors besides the pathophysiologic mechanism and objective parameters of disease activity.¹⁻³ However, it often feels that some aspects are still not talked about often enough, one of which is the effect that cardiovascular disease has on sexual behavior and function of humans.

Materials and Methods: A search of the literature has been performed in the MEDLINE, Google Scholar and Web of Science databases using combinations of keywords "cardiovascular disease", "sexual behavior", "sexual function", "sexual dysfunction".

Results: Narrative reviews, original research papers and professional society guidelines were examined to extrapolate data and recommendations regarding sexual activity and behavior in patients suffering from cardiovascular disease. The resulting paper describes ways in which physiologic changes that occur in cardiovascular disease impact sexual function, the influence of cardiovascular medications on sexual function and behavior and several recommendations for sexual behavior and habit modifications that improve patient health and protect them from risk of unwanted cardiovascular events.

Conclusion: The combination of altered physiology and medications used to treat cardiovascular disease significantly impacts normal sexual function. Seeing as sexuality is recognized as a basic human right and fundamental need with a significant impact on quality of life, some attention should be diverted to educating patients how to maintain normal and healthy sexual function despite suffering from cardiovascular disease.

RECEIVED:
November 4, 2022

ACCEPTED:
November 10, 2022



LITERATURE

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