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**The
Menopause
Society™**

Leading the Conversation

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The Effects of Sexual Orientation on Sexual Function and Distress

New study suggests cisgender heterosexual women are more satisfied in their relationships and have fewer depression and anxiety symptoms than cisgender sexual minority women

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Sept 27, 2023)—In recent years, there has been debate around the topic of who is happier, healthier, and more satisfied sexually—traditional heterosexual or sexual minority women. A new study suggests that cisgender heterosexual women have higher relationship scores and less anxiety and depression than their less traditional counterparts. Study results will be presented during the 2023 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society in Philadelphia September 27-30.

Satisfaction with one's relationship and sex life has been shown to have a direct impact on a woman's mental and physical health. Rates of substance abuse, obesity, and stroke have even been linked to sexual satisfaction and sexual distress. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted on sexual function in sexual minority women (described as a group whose sexual identity, orientation, or practices differ from the majority of the surrounding society).

A new study involving more than 6,200 sexually active women, including a small percentage of women who were identified as sexual minority women, aimed to evaluate sexual function and sexual distress in cisgender sexual minority women compared to cisgender heterosexual women.

The study concluded that, in general, sexual minority women had significantly lower quality of life and relationship satisfaction scores compared to heterosexual women. Sexual minority women were also more likely to experience anxiety and depressive symptoms, as well as sexual distress. No statistically significant differences were seen, however, for sexual dysfunction between the two groups. Additional research is needed to address multiple other variables in a larger, more diverse study population.

The results will be presented during the Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society as part of the presentation entitled "Associations of sexual function and sexual orientation in cisgender women."

"Many women feel uncomfortable discussing their sexual health with their healthcare practitioners, and this can be even more challenging for women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or queer, due to fears of stigma or discrimination. Our goal with this research was to evaluate if differences exist in female sexual functioning based on sexual orientation and utilize that information to ultimately foster a more inclusive environment in healthcare and sexual medicine," says Dr. Talia Sobel, lead author from Mayo Clinic Arizona in Scottsdale.

"As healthcare professionals, we need ensure that all women receive quality healthcare and their specific needs are being addressed," adds Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director of The Menopause Society. "The results of studies like this one will hopefully lead to improved provider-patient communications and overall care for sexual minority women."

Drs. Sobel and Faubion are available for interviews before and after the presentation at the Annual Meeting.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

The Menopause Society (formerly The North American Menopause Society) is dedicated to empowering healthcare professionals and providing them with the tools and resources to improve the health of women during the menopause transition and beyond. As the leading authority on menopause since 1989, the nonprofit, multidisciplinary organization serves as the independent, evidence-based resource for healthcare professionals, researchers, the media, and the public and leads the conversation about improving women's health and healthcare experiences. To learn more, visit menopause.org.