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Top Sexual Health Concerns of Midlife Women Include Pain and Lack of Desire

New NAMS video encourages women to initiate conversations with healthcare professionals to seek help for sexual dysfunction that affects 60% to 80% of perimenopausal and postmenopausal women

CLEVELAND, Ohio (June 15, 2022)—Studies show that a significant portion of women stay sexually active well into their 80s and beyond. The challenge is that, between aging and menopause, many women suffer from sexual dysfunction that can limit their ability to enjoy sex. Unfortunately, because of societal stigmas, many women don't seek help. But a new video from The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) seeks to change that.

The video *Discussing Sexual Health Concerns With Your Healthcare Professional* is hosted by past-NAMS president Dr. Marla Shapiro and features expert insights from Dr. Sheryl Kingsberg from University Hospitals in Cleveland.

Dr. Kingsberg breaks down women's sexual concerns into four primary categories: lack of desire (hypoactive sexual disorder); lack of arousal; pain with intercourse; and the inability to reach orgasm. Of these, she notes that pain and lack of desire are the most common at midlife. She estimates that roughly one in ten perimenopausal and postmenopausal women suffer from a lack of desire, while a whopping 60% to 80% of these same women experience pain with sexual activity. Because women may feel uncomfortable discussing these problems with their healthcare professionals to get the help they need, many suffer in silence.

"It's time that we end this conspiracy of silence," says Dr. Kingsberg. "Sexual dysfunction in men has been discussed openly for years thanks to the introduction of Viagra and a host of other readily available remedies for erectile dysfunction. But most women are hesitant to discuss their concerns, and their healthcare professionals, for the most part, don't have the training on how to talk to their patients about sexual problems. Women need to feel empowered to ask for help."

The good news, according to Dr. Kingsberg, is that there are more treatment options for women today than ever before. Local estrogen and other hormone therapies top that list, but help is also available in the form of pelvic floor physical therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy, to name just a few options.

"Many women believe that sexual dysfunction is a natural part of aging," says Dr. Kingsberg. "Part of that is true, but that doesn't mean we can't do something about it. Women color their hair to look younger and go to the gym to feel better. But when it comes to sexual concerns, most simply live with them without asking whether help is available."

"Women need to feel empowered to discuss sexual health concerns with their healthcare professionals. There are many treatment options available to women with sexual dysfunction, and bringing up the topic

during a clinic visit is the first step in ensuring that these important concerns are addressed,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director.

The new video is part of NAMS’ comprehensive video series for women on important midlife health topics and can be viewed at (link). For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.