S E X U A L  E X P R E S S I O N  O F  N U R S I N G  H O M E  R E S I D E N T S

– Systematic Review of Literature by Rodolfo Aguilar, R.N.

Introduction and Purpose
In view of the need for sexuality and sexual expression in nursing homes, and considering sexual rights as one of the inalienable human rights, the overall objective of this review was to examine literature available on the knowledge, attitudes and experiences of different stakeholders in the matter of sexuality and sexual expression in nursing homes.

Methods
An electronic search of the CINAHL and PubMed databases returned 69 and 51 citations respectively through a Boolean search of peer-reviewed, English only, full-text papers, that were published between January 2000 and November 2016, and were compliant with the following search string: (sexuality OR intimacy) AND (older people OR elder age OR older age) AND (long-term care OR nursing home) AND (attitudes OR knowledge OR experience) NOT (systematic review OR integrative review).

Figure 1: PRISMA 2009 flow diagram of the screening process

Records identified through database searching (n=120)
Records identified through snowball method (n=5)
Records after duplicates removed (n=79)
Records excluded (n=31)
Records excluded on title and abstract (n=79)
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n=48)
Full-text articles excluded with Inclusion/Exclusion criteria applied (n=35)

Results
Twelve quantitative studies were located that investigated the knowledge, attitudes and experiences of nursing home residents, relatives, administrators, care staff, and community dwellers in the matter of sexuality and sexual expression in nursing homes. [1–12]

Table 1: Summary characteristics of the studies included in the literature review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Year, Setting</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mahieu et al. (2016)</td>
<td>Nursing staff has limited knowledge about older people’s sexuality.</td>
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<td>Laster et al. (2016)</td>
<td>Higher knowledge levels are associated with more positive attitudes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yelland &amp; Hosier (2015)</td>
<td>6% of NH do not have policies dealing with resident sexual activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mavrole et al. (2013)</td>
<td>10% of the policies, 50% are in written form, the rest require physician order to either allow (1%) or restrict (99%) sexual activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Di Napoli et al. (2013)</td>
<td>Most respondents think sexual relations should be allowed in NHs regardless of resident’s age or gender.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sando-Roache &amp; Raake (2011)</td>
<td>40% of CNA yes the NH should allow residents to moderate to severe dementia to engage in sexual relationships either with their spouse (8%) or another resident (12%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di Napoli et al. (2013)</td>
<td>Nationwide use to argue against sexual activity in NHs are that the setting is inappropriate and that older people are incapable of sexual activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vanrell et al. (2010)</td>
<td>10% of residents believe residents should not engage in sexual activity, challenging sexuality as basic human right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teit et al. (2009)</td>
<td>Every fourth respondent is satisfied with his/her sexual life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teit et al. (2009)</td>
<td>Most respondents feel sexual tension occasionally, others once a week or less frequently. They relieve sexual tension through intimate contacts with their long-term partners, watching erotic films, masturbation, walking and drawing attention to other activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tramonti et al. (2010)</td>
<td>Most seniors voice repeated stereotypes about sexuality of the elderly. Almost 71% claim that sex is for young people only, and 51% think that sex is not important in life.</td>
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</table>

Conclusions
The scarce literature on sexual expression in nursing homes mostly reflects women’s perspective and vastly neglects residents’ vision about their own sexual expression in their institutionalized homes. There is an inexorable need to transform the current administrative model in nursing homes to allow residents to be part of the decision-making process, which is a critical first step in restructuring the environment into a more home-like setting. To have a better and more exhaustive understanding of the individualized needs for sexual expression in nursing homes, study enrollment criteria should acknowledge gender identities and include minority subpopulations, like LGBTQI in future research. Conclusions of this review support the need to shift our focus in research and in nursing practice towards those individual needs of nursing home residents to accommodate their values and expectations with dignity, justice, and respect in a true person-centered model of care.

References
1. Rai P., Chatterjee D., Sikdar J., Verma N., Devi M., Bhatnagar B. Copyright © 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved., 2015; 606-603.

Acknowledgements
Special thanks to Dr. Sharon Brown for her guidance, support, and encouragement.

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