

“Which clinical conditions do you think could benefit from Internet Interventions?”: preliminary results from a qualitative study with European Clinical Sexologists

Patrícia M. Pascoal¹, Andreia A. Manão¹, Marcos Bote², Sam Ward³, Alexis Dewaele⁴

¹Lusófona University, HEI-Lab: Digital Human-Environment Interaction Labs, Portugal

²University of Murcia, Spain

³Urology Department, Clinique Saint Jean, Brussels

⁴Ghent University, Department of Experimental Clinical and Health Psychology, Belgium

Objective: The internet has complemented and extended sexual health services, making them more accessible and potentially more cost-effective. Despite the increasing recognition that internet interventions are a valuable tool in sexual health contexts, there is a lack of research on the perceptions of clinical sexologists on how to develop and enhance these interventions. This research is necessary to ensure that traditional face-to-face therapeutic approaches can be adapted and applied to online platforms, aiming to improve the treatment's effectiveness and ensure the patient's well-being. Through qualitative data, this study aimed to understand European clinical sexologists' views about which clinical conditions related to sexuality may benefit from internet interventions.

Design and Method: An ESMN's COST action group developed this study. A total of 23 European clinical sexologists ($M = 46.26$; $SD = 12.84$) participated, of which 11 self-identified as women (47.82%) and 12 as men (52.17%). Among all, 14 were clinical sexologists (60.9%), 6 were urologists (26.1%), and 1 mentioned “Psychology Ph.D. student” (4.4%). The question was: “Which clinical conditions do you think could benefit from internet interventions?” and was analyzed through summative content analysis.

Results: Preliminary results showed that the participants consider that people may benefit from internet interventions related to their sexuality in the following situations: 1) Sexual dysfunctions (e.g., premature ejaculation), 2) Psychological problems (e.g., anxiety-based sexual problems; psychiatric conditions that involve sexual symptoms), 3) Neurodevelopmental diversity (e.g., autism), 4) Non-clinical conditions (e.g., non-normative sexual orientations) and 5) Universal indication (e.g., all conditions impacting sexual health).

Conclusions: Our results underscore the potential of internet interventions to treat diverse clinical and non-clinical conditions in the sexual domain, moving beyond a narrow view of sexual problems as equal to sexual dysfunctions or categorical diagnosis and acknowledging the broad scope of problems that involve sexual outcomes and variables.