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Introduction to Psychosexual Medicine, Third Edition

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The task of psychosexual medicine is “to help the person first complete the job of expressing, and then hearing, their own story”. The emphasis throughout the *Introduction to Psychosexual Medicine*, demonstrated through compassionate case studies and thoughtful processes of reflection, is to examine the ‘here and now’, whilst respecting the ‘there and then’. You come away from the text with a greater understanding of the pathophysiological underpinnings of illnesses and conditions, the psychosexual impact these can have on the body, mind and relationships, and the ways in which psychosexual medicine can help.

The text is supported by sound references and reads well, given certain caveats. Obviously, no single book can encompass all matters, but I was impressed by the contents of the 27 chapters, with apparent inclusivity of subjects, from historical developments of psychosexual medicine, through physiology and psychology of sexual problems, application of skills and the efficacy of therapeutic ‘body mind’ psychosexual practice to associated

education and service delivery. I was somewhat disappointed by the number of chapters that reverted to, or revolved around, core themes of erectile dysfunction, vaginismus, dyspareunia and non-consummation, predominantly with cis-gender straight people.

In parts, the text reads as though the sole aim of sexual activity was in rather Freudian notions of 'penetration', and coupling in a lifelong union. There is less emphasis on the joys, pleasures, meanings and fulfilment of non-penetrative sex. The joys and pleasures of sex, Foucault's *ars erotica*, including transgressive queer and kink, could have more profiling, as could epistemological challenging of masculinist notions of "impotence" and feminism's critique of the female orgasm. The text is a bit "we doctors", given the potential multi-professional audience now admitted to the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine's programmes of education (www.ipm.org), including nurses, physiotherapists and other clinical professionals who also deserve to be addressed. Additionally, the numerous references to how beautiful, smart, tidy and prim clients looked left me wondering how they would deal with ugly people, or those not fitting this 'nice' mould.

Despite a nodding reference to transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, elements of the book perpetuate the myth of two genders, with a Freudian predilection for 'normality'. It also confused sexual "preference" for "orientation". A true 'queering' of this text would beneficially challenge some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about sex and its meanings. The accounts of old people (defined as 65 and over) in a chapter on 'approaching end of life' also seemed rather dubious, leaving me feeling that a shove outside the box, or *to queer* the topics, might have broadened the book's appeal.

However, this is a valuable text, but I would recommend it would benefit from a companion volume that includes the perspectives of other healthcare professionals now educated by the IPM. A companion text could address issues only touched on here, which really do need more attention, including training chaperones how to be IPM-relevant chaperones; wider emphasis on psychosexual impacts of abortion – on male partners, too; Female Genital Cutting / Mutilation; PTSD from genital torture or sexual violence and rape against, or witnessed by, victims of war and asylum seekers; coping with sex and disabilities; physical changes over the life-course; commercial, recreational and regretted sex; chem sex, and issues for those who 'shut up shop' but are now back open again, including people living with HIV, when U = U (Undetectable equals Uninfectious).

Nevertheless, this textbook is essential for students of the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine for developing therapeutic counselling techniques, as well as providing a resource for new and experienced IPM practitioners and seminar leaders. The readership could be wider still, as this is of relevance across disciplines and professions, clinical and educational, in health, social care and counselling. This would be a useful guide to anyone working with clients having various psychosexual needs, be these pathophysiological conditions, body / mind, or mind / body related problems across the life-course.