

Women's bodies and the power of pleasure in medical care

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Contemporary medical care for women is trending toward technological intervention focusing on pathology, and away from fostering pleasure. There exists a widening divide between the psychosexual needs of women and pharmacological/procedural offerings of medicine. A model of sex positive health care should incorporate specific techniques to teach women about form and function in order to connect with and embrace sexual well-being and sovereignty, while meeting their need to treat disease. Treatment of pathology usually trumps encouragement of pleasure, and physicians are rarely trained in appropriate discussion of sexual concerns or how to promote pleasure-based regimens of healing. Social conditioning and myths pervade our psyche, setting up the female population for pain, distress, and disempowerment. Medical providers focus on disease, while disregarding the inherent erotic intelligence that lives in every person. Attention is placed on the object of pathology, rather than the person, and a woman may not feel safe or comfortable in discussing the details of her intimate behaviour. A more successful approach holistically promotes conscious connection with anatomic form and physiologic function. This format, adapted from the 4-D Wheel of Sexual Experience, invites the woman on a journey inward and outward, as she is guided through the experience of her body-mind-heart-spirit; told through the perspective of her genitals,

which provide the "voice". Women can learn to manipulate their brain neurochemistry through intentional practice, focal objects, and conditioning behaviour. Multiple nerve pathways deliver unique routes to sexual arousal and orgasm, providing a framework to help women re-sensitize and re-vitalize their relationship with their bodies. The interplay of hormones and pheromones in behaviour and sexuality of women, leads to recognition that pleasure plays an integral role in healing and maintenance of long-term health. We should educate women about their bodies and pleasure, while empowering them to master their own sexual health.

Speaker Biography

Debra S Wickman is a gynecologist certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She directs female sexual medicine, vulvar medicine and menopause services, in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Banner University Medical Center – Phoenix and is a clinical faculty member of University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix. She completed a fellowship in female sexual medicine at UCLA and is also a certified sexuality counsellor. Her model of diagnosis and treatment incorporates programs that uniquely educate, empower, and encourage personal growth, sexual discovery and healing for women. The programs look beyond a singular medical, pharmaceutical, or behavioural therapy, and instead integrate all approaches from a mind-body perspective. Central to her model is a holistic sexuality approach, using her training as a gynecologist to link the physical aspect of healing with the mental, emotional and spiritual facets to treat the whole sexual being.

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