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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE SEXUALITY OF A SAMPLE OF MOROCCAN PATIENTS RECOVERED FROM THE CORONA VIRUS

Abdeljalil Heddat, Younes Houry, Ghassane Elomri and Redoune Rabii

Cheikh Khalifa International University Hospital, Mohammed VI University of Health Sciences (UM6SS),  
Casablanca, Morocco.

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#### Abstract

Since December 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has known a rapid and distressing spread. Little is known about the sexual impact on infected patients. However, several studies have reported a significant psychological impact on the population. The objective of our study is to assess the impact of the COVID19 pandemic on the sexuality of individuals who have been infected with the virus. Our study focuses on a population of 50 Moroccan patients initially declared to have COVID-19, using a multiple choice questionnaire on sexuality before and after infection with the virus. All participants were part of a couple in which at least one of the two partners had been infected with SARS-CoV-2. The results showed that all subjects were sexually active before their infection, of which 20% were dissatisfied with their sex life. At the time of our study, 78% of the recovered patients had not resumed sexual activity. 60% said they were anxious about having sex and 81% said the pandemic had altered their sex life. Only one patient reports an increase in libido and an improvement in the quality of orgasm. A couple reported having resumed sexual activity but with a change in their relationships. Anxiety and fear of infecting the other are major concerns, which affect the resumption of normal sexual activity and which sometimes lead to a change in sexual practices.

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#### Introduction:-

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a new human coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Its emergence in the city of Wuhan, China, in November 2019 sparked a pandemic. This pandemic arrived in Morocco on March 2, 2020. Since then, the number of reported cases has continued to increase.

To combat the spread of this disease, human relationships and social interactions had to be changed. We have studied the impact of COVID-19 on sexuality after recovery from a patient population initially positive for SARS-CoV-2.

#### Materials and Methods:-

Our study concerns a population of 50 Moroccan patients initially declared to have COVID-19 after a positive RT-PCR on a nasopharyngeal swab.

All patients were hospitalized and treated at the Sheikh Khalifa International University Hospital. They returned home after biological recovery, defined by two consecutive negative RT-PCR test results at least 24 hours apart, or after clinical recovery and after 24 days of hospitalization.

All participants were part of a couple in which at least one of the partners had been infected with SARS-CoV-2, and therefore hospitalized and confined. They were all sexually active before their infection and recovery. They were subjected to an anonymous questionnaire containing 29 multiple-choice questions, relating to their sexuality before their infection with SARS-CoV-2, then to the repercussions of the latter on their couple relationship and their sexual relations.

The free and informed consent of all participants has been obtained.

### **Results:-**

Characteristics of the study population Of the 50 participants, 73% were men and 77% were over the age of 45. 69% of patients had no medical history. The rest of the patients were being treated for non-insulin-dependent diabetes and / or high blood pressure.

Of the 50 participants, 66% were declared to be biologically cured. The rest were cured clinically.

At the time of the study, all participants had reached their homes: 7% for less than a week, 50% for one to two weeks, 25% for two to three weeks and 18% for more than three weeks. Of the 50 participants, 77% were confined with their spouse.

#### Sexuality before SARS-CoV-2 infection

All subjects were sexually active in their couples before their infection with SARS-CoV-2.

The frequency of their sexual intercourse was several times a day for 6% of the participants, several times a week for 47%, several times a month for 35% and less than once a month for 12% of the participants.

Satisfaction with patients' sexual lives before COVID-19 was also assessed. 20% of patients declared themselves dissatisfied with their sex life, 10% somewhat satisfied, 50% satisfied and the remaining 20% very satisfied.

Only one patient out of 50 participants had ever had a sexual disorder (reduced libido) before being infected with SARS-CoV-2.

#### Sexuality after recovery from COVID-19

At the time of our study, 78% of patients cured and confined with their partners had not resumed sexual activity. Of the 50 participants, 60% said they were anxious about having sex and 81% believed that the pandemic had altered their sex life.

The patient who had previously had a drop in libido before his infection with SARS-CoV-2 believes that his disorder has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of the 50 participants, only one patient believes that their sex life has improved since their infection and recovery. It reports an increase in libido and an improvement in the quality of orgasm.

Among the interviewees, a couple made up of two patients, both first infected and then cured of COVID-19, declared having resumed sexual activity but with a modification of their relationships, in particular by limiting contacts involving an exchange of saliva or using a condom.

**Discussion:-**

Our study allowed us to conclude that the COVID-19 pandemic has altered sexual relations within couples where at least one of the two members has been infected. The main disorder noted is a decrease in libido, which is in agreement with studies carried out in other countries [1].

Patients who had COVID-19 still have anxiety, even after recovery, from fear of re-infection, or from contagion from their uninfected partner.

For these couples, changing intercourse can be an effective way to limit the risk of partner infection. Wearing a condom appears to be an essential method of avoiding contact with the sperm of the patient initially infected with SARS-CoV-2, which may still contain traces of the virus even after the patient has recovered.

**Conclusion:-**

The COVID-19 pandemic has considerably modified social relationships and human contacts, especially patients suffering from the disease, in whom there is notably a deterioration in the quality of sexual life, even after their recovery. Anxiety and the fear of infecting others are major concerns, which prevent the resumption of sexual activity or which sometimes lead to a change in sexual practices.

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