

Epidemiological studies of sexuality in old age

Akademisk avhandling

som för avläggande av medicine doktorsexamen vid Sahlgrenska Akademin vid Göteborgs universitet
kommer att offentligt försvaras i hörsal Ivan Östholm, Medicinaregatan 13, Göteborg,
fredagen den 30 januari 2015 kl. 13.00

av

Nils Beckman

Fakultetsopponent:

Professor Charlotta Löfgren-Mårtenson
Hälsa och Samhälle, Malmö Högskola
Inriktning sexologi och sexualitetsstudier.
Förestandare Centrum för sexologi och sexualitetsstudier.

Avhandlingen baseras på fyra delarbeten:

- I. Nils Beckman, Margda Waern, Deborah Gustafson, Ingmar Skoog. Secular trends in self reported sexual activity and satisfaction in Swedish 70 year olds: cross sectional survey of four populations, 1971-2001. *BMJ*, 2008. 337: p. a279.
- II. Nils Beckman, Margda Waern, Svante Östling, Valter Sundh, Ingmar Skoog. Sexuality in 97-year-olds; a population-based cross-sectional study in Gothenburg, Sweden. *In manuscript*
- III. Nils Beckman, Margda Waern, Svante Östling, Valter Sundh, Ingmar Skoog. Determinants of sexual activity in four birth cohorts of Swedish 70-year-olds examined 1971-2001. *J Sex Med*, 2014. 11(2): p. 401-10.
- IV. Nils Beckman, Margda Waern, Svante Östling, Valter Sundh, Hanna Falk, Tore Hällström, Ingmar Skoog. Childhood and midlife factors in relation to sexuality in mid- and late life. A population-based study of women followed over 24-32 years. *In manuscript*



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

ABSTRACT

Aim: The overall aim of this thesis was to improve knowledge about sexuality in an older population and to try to understand the context and factors, affecting sexuality in general population. It is based on three studies of general populations in Gothenburg. The multidisciplinary H70 studies (longitudinal gerontological and geriatric studies) were used for paper I and III. The 95+ study for paper II and the Prospective Population Study of Women were used for paper IV.

Methods: H70 studies started in 1971-72 with the aim of studying health and health related factors in a population of 70-year-olds. 70-year-olds were also examined in 1976-77, 1992-93, and 2000-2001. Total n=1 506 eligible for examination. The study on 97-year-olds comprises those born between July 1, 1901 and December 31, 1909. Eligible for the study was n=911, among those n=591 participated (response rate 64.9%). Study IV is part of the Prospective Population Study of Women. In 1968–69, a representative systematically selected sample of 710 women aged 38 years (born 1930), 46 years (born 1922), and 50 years (born 1918). All studies included physical and psychiatric examinations. Individuals with dementia were excluded in the analysis of sexuality. All studies are based on representative population living in Gothenburg, systematically obtained from the Swedish Population Register.

Results: *Paper I and III* In the time period 1971-2 and 2000-1, sexual activity in men increased from 47% to 66%, and in women 12% to 34%. Sexual activity was related to positive attitude toward sexuality, having a very happy relationship, having a physically and mentally healthy partner, being married or cohabiting. *Paper II* Almost half of the sample had a positive attitude towards sexuality and considered it to be normal for people at their own age to have sexual interest and needs. 88% of the men and 82% of the women considered questions on sexuality in a health survey to be positive and natural. *Paper IV* Sexuality in middle-aged and older women is dependent on a number of basic conditions, such as general well-being, physical and mental health and quality of the relationship or life situation.

Conclusion: Quantity and quality of sexual experiences among 70 year olds improved over a 30 year study period. It is important to have a multifactorial, a multidisciplinary approach in the exploration of mid- and late life sexuality. A great majority find it natural to include questions on sexuality in health examinations why health professionals should not hesitate to ask about sexual concerns despite age.

Keywords: Old people sexuality, Midlife women, Sexual concerns in human senescence, Cross-sectional, General population.

ISBN: 978-91-628-9226-5 (tryckt)

ISBN: 978-91-628-9232-6 (e-pub)