After Trauma, 31% Report Sexual Dysfunction

BY ROBERT FINN
San Francisco Bureau
SAN FRANCISCO — Nearly one-third of trauma patients reported at least some degree of sexual dysfunction a year after injury, according to a multicenter prospective cohort study.

This rate is about double that of healthy patients, and triple that of healthy patients under the age of 50 years, Dr. Matthew D. Sorenson said at the annual clinical conference of the American College of Surgeons.

“In fact, we found that a moderate to severe traumatic injury imparts a risk of sexual dysfunction above and beyond the risk that may be imparted by known risk factors for sexual dysfunction, such as increasing age, diabetes, and lower socioeconomic status,” Dr. Sorenson of the University of Washington, Seattle, said in a prepared statement.

The study was based on data from the National Study on the Costs and Outcomes of Trauma (NSCOT), which included 69 hospitals from 15 geographic regions in the United States. Patients were between 18 and 84 years of age and had moderate to severe injuries. A year following their injuries patients completed a 45-minute phone interview. Of 10,122 patients, 3,087 (31%) answered yes to the question, “As a result of your physical health, were you limited in your ability to have sexual relations?”

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NSCOT was supported by the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Sorenson disclosed no conflicts of interest.

For most practitioners, both primary care and trauma physicians, sexual function is not on their radar screen, and most often they think of erectile dysfunction in men. ... But sexual dysfunction is a major determinant of quality of life, impacts both men and women, and if physicians don’t ask patients about their sexual health, the patients are unlikely to bring it up. This is something physicians should be asking their patients about, because there are excellent medications that work in the majority of patients.”

At the annual conference of the American College of Surgeons, Dr. Matthew D. Sorenson, M.D., said that nearly one-third of trauma patients reported at least some degree of sexual dysfunction a year after injury—about double that of healthy patients, and triple that of healthy patients under the age of 50. In a prepared statement, Dr. Sorenson said that an estimated 3,087 (31%) of 10,122 patients surveyed were limited in their ability to have sexual relations as a result of their physical health, and that these findings should serve as a wake-up call for physicians who treat trauma patients.

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PSYCHIATRY JANUARY 1, 2009 • INTERNAL MEDICINE NEWS

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