Clinical sexology: An integrated approach between the psychosomatic and the somatopsychic

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Summary During the past three decades, integration in sexology between specialists, models and intervention techniques has decidedly increased, both in clinical practice and in international research contributions. The training of the sexologist, a figure often not officially recognized in spite of growing client demand, is still a critical issue. This paper describes the Italian situation through the 20-year experience of Rome’s Clinical Sexology Institute in training doctors and psychologists interested in acquiring the specific competencies required to work in the sexology field. The clinical experience of the ICS team, for a long time available only to patients in private clinics but today extended to patients in a public hospital, serves as a natural basis for transmitting flexible theoretical and technical knowledge, as required by the integrated approach. The context in which the clinical practice is carried out, also underlines the limits and resources of the integrated approach, a modality which ideally takes into consideration and puts on the same level of importance body, mind and relationship.

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Introduction
In spite of a growing demand for help in the sexual field, both from individuals with sexual difficulties and from institutions aiming to prevent sex abuse, STDs and every kind of discomfort relating to sexual health, a paradox exists regarding the professional figure of the sexologist.

The fact that neither a specific university degree nor a professional register exist in Italy leaves the position of sexologist as a title without legal protection.

Even more at risk is the status and professional practice of sexologists who are not physicians (Simonelli et al., 2006). Nonetheless among Italian sexologists, physicians (urologists, andrologists, gynecologists, psychiatrists) are in the minority compared to psychologists (psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, marriage therapists).

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