



# The Psychosexual Care of Women Affected by Gynaecological Cancers:

## Developing an Interactive Training Module for Health Professionals

Treatment for a gynaecological cancer can alter a woman's behaviours, attitudes and feelings towards sexuality and intimacy.

Women with a gynaecological cancer can sometimes experience:

- changes to body image or how a woman sees herself and how she thinks others see her;
- loss of femininity as a result of treatment;
- feeling a loss of wholeness;
- isolation from others;
- fear of rejection from their partner; and
- guilt or a fear that sexual activity will result in pain or will cause the cancer to reappear.

The National Centre for Gynaecological Cancers has commissioned a project to develop a training module for health professionals, to assist the development of knowledge and skills needed to support women experiencing these problems.

Once developed, the interactive web-based module and supporting material will provide training to health professionals across all levels of health care. The module due for release in August 2010 will include the following topics:

1. Understanding sexuality
2. Understanding the experience of the psychosexual effect of a gynaecological cancer
3. Enquiring about and responding to the psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers
4. Undertaking a comprehensive sexual health assessment
5. Evidence based approaches to treatment of psychosexual sequelae of gynaecological cancers.
6. Advanced therapeutic interventions.

This project is a National Centre for Gynaecological Cancers initiative, funded by the Australian Government.

For further information or to provide feedback please visit our website.

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[www.hlth.qut.edu.au/nrs/research/researchprojects/gynaecancer.jsp](http://www.hlth.qut.edu.au/nrs/research/researchprojects/gynaecancer.jsp)

[www.canceraustralia.gov.au/ncgc-homepage.aspx](http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/ncgc-homepage.aspx)

### What is sexuality and what are psychosexual issues?

Sexuality is not only about physical intimacy, but includes a person's behaviours, desires and attitudes about themselves and how they express themselves to others. Sexuality can be expressed in many ways, from the clothes someone wears, the way they talk or the way they move, to the way someone expresses themselves during physical intimacy<sup>1</sup>.

Psychosexual issues are when someone has trouble with their sexuality. It can be a physical, mental or psychological concern. Sometimes it can be a minor concern which is easily overcome, while at other times it can be more serious. Depending on the severity, the level and type of intervention required can vary.

<sup>1</sup>Cancer Council, 'Sexual Intimacy and Cancer: A guide for people with cancer, their families and friends', Page 4.

