

Master Class – Addressing the Sexual Rights of Older People

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The sexual rights of older people are a fundamental component of human rights; however, there is currently no framework for addressing older people's sexual rights. Using the Declaration of Sexual Rights developed by the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS) as a basis, we present a framework for understanding the sexual rights of older people in order to improve awareness and support.

We will explore how the sexual rights of older people are seldom understood, respected or protected due to the sexuality of older people not being sufficiently recognized. For example, the social construction of old age tends to deny active sexuality, while the social construction of sexuality often rejects old age. Both can lead to the assumption that sexual rights are not important to older people.

A sexual rights framework for older people demands that attention is paid to all aspects of sexuality, promotes awareness of sexual agency, sexual identity, and sexual vulnerability, while emphasizing safety, protection, privacy, independence, and freedom. Neglecting to address the sexual rights of older people is a failure of care and an act of discrimination. Indeed, the World Health Organization (2015) report on Sexual Health, Human Rights and the Law asserts that the denial of access to education and services, the lack of protection from discrimination, and the failure to preserve privacy and confidentiality within health and social care can have a negative impact on health and well-being.

Master Class Objectives:

- to explore what we already know about older people's sexuality
- to learn about sexual rights and how they can be applied to older people
- to examine the barriers and facilitators to implementing a sexual rights approach for older people
- to generate ideas about the ways that sexual rights can be applied in services and organisations

Presenter Biography



Dr. Sharron Hinchliff, Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Sheffield, UK

Dr Sharron Hinchliff is Senior Lecturer at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sheffield. She has a PhD and a BSc (Hons) in Psychology, and has conducted research into gender and health for over 20 years. Sharron currently leads the sexual health and well-being, ageing, and gender programme of research at the University which focuses on understanding health-related behaviours to improve health and inform professional practice. She has published extensively in these areas, particularly older people's sexual health and well-being, and her co-edited book 'Addressing the sexual rights of older people: Theory, policy and practice', is currently in press. See her personal website for further details: www.sharronhinchliff.com



Dr. Sue Malta, Research Fellow, University Of Melbourne

Sue Malta is a sociologist with research interests in ageing, sexual health and wellbeing, technology, social connection/isolation, and ageism amongst others. Her PhD investigated love, sex and intimacy in new late-life romantic relationships, online and offline. She currently works in the Sexual Health Unit, MSPGH, University of Melbourne, on the Sexual Health and Ageing, Perspectives and Education (SHAPE) project investigating sexual health discussions in primary care and how to facilitate such discussions occurring. She is also a Research Fellow/ Stream Leader, Social Connections and Relationships, at the National Ageing Research Institute where she works on projects involving the care and wellbeing of older adults. In addition, she is an Adjunct Research Fellow at Swinburne University where she collaborates on projects addressing sexual health promotion and ageing; and is a collaborator on the La Trobe University project, Sex, Age & Me. As an early career researcher she has published widely and in 2012 contributed a chapter entitled “Using online methods to interview older adults about their romantic and sexual relationships” in *Researching Later Life and Ageing - Expanding Qualitative Research Horizons* (Palgrave). Her new chapter “Older people as cyber-sexual beings: Online and internet dating” was published in *'Addressing the Sexual Rights of Older People'* (Routledge 2017), which is the subject of a Masterclass at this year's IFA conference. She is a member of the Australian Association of Gerontology, The Australian Sociological Association and the Sexual Health Society of Victoria and a new IFA member.