



Sexual Health Toxicity in Cancer  
Survivors: Is there a Gender Disparity  
in Physician Evaluation and  
Intervention?

**James Taylor, MD, MPH**

*Sidney Kimmel Medical College & Cancer  
Center*

# Disclosure

- Chief Resident Physician at Thomas Jefferson University
- I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

# Cancer Treatment & Sexual Health

- As cancer therapy improves, the number of survivors living with treatment-related side effects is increasing
- Cancer treatment can negatively impact survivors' sexual health, but questions remain:



How **common** is sexual toxicity among survivors?

How do physicians **ask** about sexual side effects?

How do physicians **manage** and **treat** sexual side effects?

# Methods

- 405 adults completed an anonymous survey about their experiences with sexual side effects after cancer treatment
- Survey distributed in clinic and on social media
- Most respondents were from social media
- Among respondents, a variety of ages, cancer types and treatments received

Gender	
Female	313 (81%)
Male	72 (19%)
Age	
18-40	91 (23%)
41-50	115 (30%)
51-60	89 (23%)
>60	93 (24%)
Cancer Diagnosis	
Breast	261 (67%)
Prostate	61 (16%)
Gynecological	33 (8%)
Other	48 (9%)
Treatment(s) Received	
Chemotherapy	305 (78%)
Radiation therapy	208 (54%)
Hormonal therapy	185 (48%)
Other	161 (43%)

# Results: Sexual Side Effects

- Nearly 9 in 10 respondents (87%) reported some change after cancer treatment that negatively impacted their sexual health

**80%**

**Lost desire/  
sexual interest**

**75%**

**Challenges  
with arousal**

**70%**

**Pain during  
intercourse**

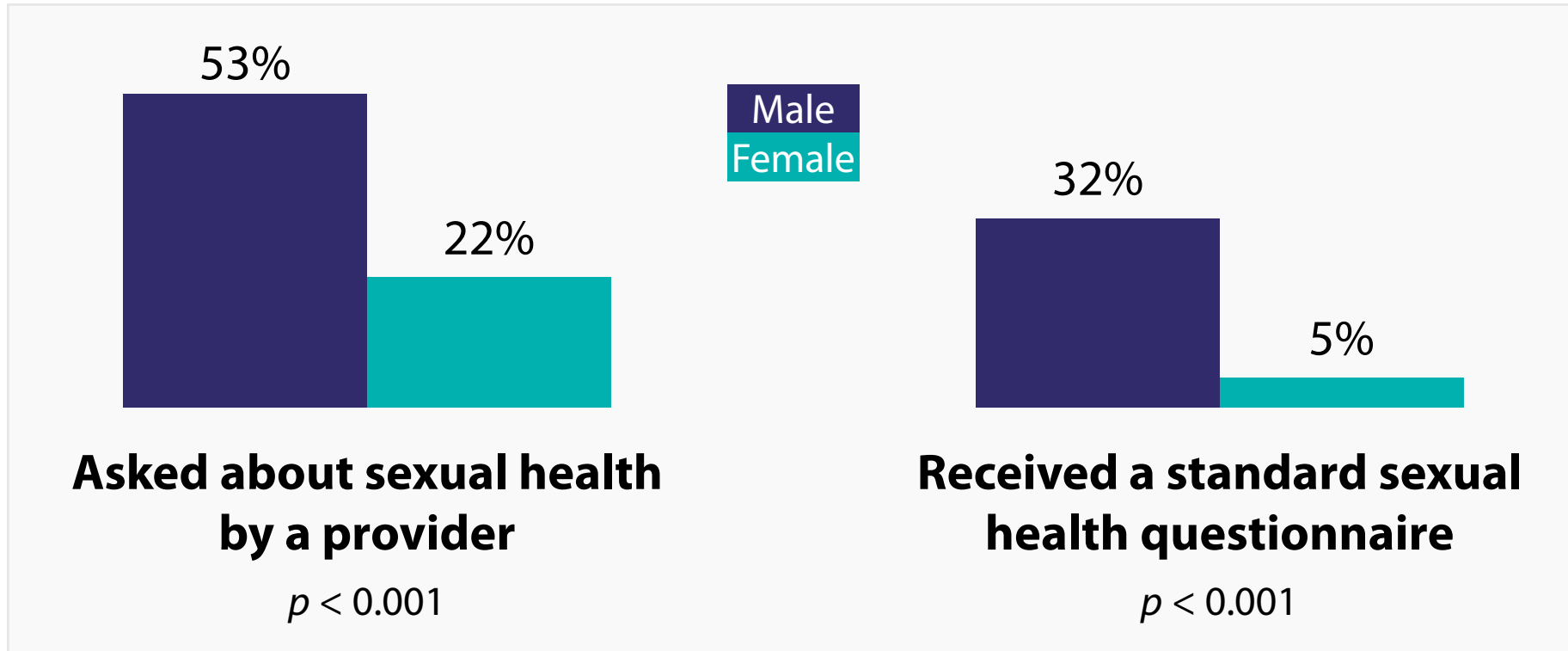
**57%**

**Difficulty  
reaching orgasm**

- Fewer than half of the respondents (44%) said they were preemptively warned that their sexual health could be affected by treatment

# Results: Gender

- Female cancer survivors were less likely than male survivors to have sexual side effects addressed by providers



# Results: Discussion Tools

- A majority of respondents (51%) said they would like a standard questionnaire to initiate/guide the discussion on sexual health with their provider



# Conclusions

- Negative effects on sexual health after cancer treatment (ie, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, radiation therapy, surgery) are unfortunately common
- Women who survive cancer are less likely than men to have their sexual side effects addressed by their provider
- Standardized questionnaires seem to be the preferred way for providers to initiate these sensitive conversations
- Oncology practices should integrate questionnaires that assess sexual health into survivorship care for all patients