



MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

National Center for Primary Care

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I commend AARP for addressing an issue that is vital to the health and wellbeing of all Americans, old and young. Sexual health is a sensitive subject for many people, including health care providers, to talk about. This AARP study, "Sexuality at Midlife: 2004 Update of Attitudes and Behaviors (May 23, 2005)," contributes to our understanding of sexuality and sexual health.

Many believe that sexuality is the exclusive province of the young. But, this AARP study makes clear that, even as we age, sexual health continues to be important to our general health.

From a public health perspective, it is clear from CDC studies that people in this age category are at significant risk for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, the impact of sexual health on the quality of life of people as they age is so critical and relates to one of the goals of healthy people 2010.

The good news from this AARP survey is that more men and women in midlife and older are turning to health professionals to improve their sexual health. This means however, that health professionals must be increasingly better prepared to deal with issues related to sexual health.

The troubling news from this AARP survey is that many midlife and older Americans are not receiving treatment for a variety of illnesses and conditions that may affect their sexual health as part of their overall health and well-being.

I am sure that this AARP study will open up further public dialogue on the importance of sexual health to the old as well as the young. Moreover, if it is widely publicized, this study will help professionals, as well as patients to discuss issues of sexual health more effectively.

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