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Impact of self-image and sexual functioning on quality of life of patients living with LVAD and their partners

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Patients with left ventricular assist device (LVAD) implantation carry a controller in a bag which is linked to the LVAD pump by a cable through abdominal wall. This may impact self-image of patients as well as sexual functioning and sexual activity. Sexual dysfunction is associated with lower health related quality of life (HrQoL), which also may impact partners' sexuality and HrQoL. The current study investigates HrQoL and sexual activity in male patients and their female spouses after LVAD implantation. Moreover, self-image of patients, composed of self-acceptance and perceived partner acceptance, and other impact factors were examined. N=39 male patients and their female partners completed questionnaires. Time since implantation varied between 0.3 and 9.8 years (M=3.80; SD=2.36). The mean age of patients/partners was 62.37 (SD=9.36, 45-78)/60.28 (SD=9.73, 34-77) years. 30/34 patients/partners mentioned no elucidation about sex after LVAD implantation, while 23/20 patients/partners wished to have been better elucidated. A significant correlation between age and men desire for sexual activity ($r=0.377, p=0.026$) and age and self-acceptance of patients ($r=0.449, p=0.007$) emerged. Controlling for age differences, patients mental HrQoL correlates with self-acceptance of male patients ($p=0.013$). Patients with poorer sexual functioning scored lower on perceived partner acceptance ($p=0.043$). Women who mentioned sexual dysfunction had lower mental HrQoL ($p=0.001$) and men living in a relationship with sexual problems scored poorer self and partner acceptance ($p=0.027 / p=0.021$) (see Figure 1). Sexual (dys) functioning after LVAD implantation seems to impact patients self-image and quality of life of patients and partners. Probably sexuality after LVAD implantation should be better communicated by surgeons to prevent a poor self-image and loss of mental quality of life.

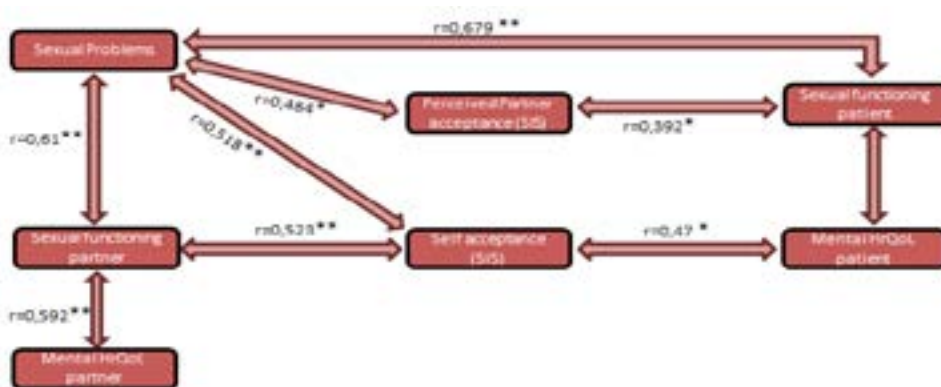


Figure 1: Correlation between sexual functioning, self-image and mental quality of life of patients living with LVAD and their partners (controlling for age) * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; (SIS) Self-image scale; (HrQoL) health related quality of life.

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Recent Publications:

1. Duval et al (2013) Sexual function after left ventricular assist device. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. 61:19.
2. Hasin et al (2014) Sexual function in patients supported with left ventricular assist device and with heart transplant. *ESC Heart Fail*. 1(2):103-109.
3. Kugler et al (2017) Sexual activity in patients with left ventricular assist devices and their partners: impact of the device on quality of life, anxiety and depression. *European Journal of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery* 1–8.
4. Merle et al (2015) Sexual concerns of patients with implantable left ventricular assist devices. *Artificial Organs* 39(8):664–669.
5. Samuels et al (2004) Psychosocial and sexual concerns of patients with implantable left ventricular assist devices: A pilot study. *Thorac Cardiovasc Surg* 127:1432-5.

Biography

Finja Jünemann is a medical student at Hannover Medical School. She is a PhD student in a clinical research program since July 2017. In her thesis, she investigates the psychological and medical functioning of couples with LVAD implantation.

Notes: