

Gaps and Opportunities

Exploring Service Gaps for Out-of-Control Sexual Behaviour

Who We Are

- SRWC is a community-based agency in Winnipeg, which offers several choices of “pre” and “post” treatment services to adults dealing with substance abuse.
- We facilitate group and individual counselling sessions in a welcoming, non-judgemental environment.
- Our philosophy is participant-centered, and our program content is flexible to the needs of the participants. Services are offered on a sliding scale, and are free for those who cannot pay.

What We Saw

- Numerous calls to SRWC and the Manitoba provincial help-line seem to show a growing need for accessible services to help individuals manage their out-of-control sexual behaviour.
- Evidence continues to demonstrate the inherent link between sexual health and sustainable recovery from substance abuse.
- We had heard informally from participants that individuals were having a hard time finding places that understand and supported recovery from both out-of-control sexual behaviour and recovery from substance abuse.



WE NEED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT THE NEED IS, AND WHAT OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO FILL THE SERVICE GAPS--IN ORDER TO BETTER SERVE INDIVIDUALS DEALING WITH BOTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES AND OUT-OF-CONTROL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR.

What We Created

SRWC contracted an independent researcher to gather information about the amount and accessibility of services for helping individuals deal with out-of-control sexual behaviour. Information was gathered from the recovery, medical and psychiatric communities.

Process

- The researcher used phone books, professional literature, and verbal recommendations to find individuals and agencies to ask about what services were needed and what is available. Web polls, phone interviews, and in-person discussions were used to evaluate the current situation in Manitoba.

Publishing

- The data and recommendations were collected in the research paper: “Gaps And Opportunities In Addressing Sexual Health In Manitoba” (Andrea Shalay, MA; Noah Star, MMFT; 2016)
- The paper was presented at SRWC’s 2016 Addictions Awareness Week conference: “Sex and Addictions: Integrating a New Model for Understanding Addictions and Sexuality”

What We Found¹

- The definitions of out of control sexual behaviour vs sexual addiction are ill defined and sexual addiction is not explicitly covered in the DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).
- Lack of diagnostic tools to assess the prevalence and extent of the problem.
- There is a lack of advertised supports.
- There are only a few practitioners and for-profit centres, and many who offer help have a fee-for-service basis, which influences accessibility.
- A major issue in identifying problematic sexual behaviour is that it is often a taboo topic socially for those experiencing the problem, and professionally for counsellors and other helpers.

Language

A significant challenge in having this conversation is the language people use to define the problem.

- Those who understand it as out-of-control sexual behavior (OCSB), generally define it as a behavioral problem within the normal range of sexual expression. Typically, they talk about it as a sexual health problem in which consensual sexual urges, thoughts, or behaviors feel out of control. They may argue that “addiction” is not a helpful or adequate label for most individuals struggling with sexual behaviors.
- Those who understand it as an addiction commonly place it within the disease model, and emphasise abstinence. Typically, they talk about the “sex addict”, as being compelled to engage in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior despite increasing negative consequences to self and others.

How Do We Fill These Gaps?

Short Term

- Questions on intake / assessment forms to flag possible problems.
- Sexual Health modules as part of psycho-educational sessions.
- Training for community based mental health and addiction treatment counsellors on different, proven, treatment modalities.
- Training for current providers, and new students so that at minimum each organization has a knowledgeable/specialist staff member and is able to offer one-to-one counselling.
- Certification of out-of-control sexual behavioural specialists in Manitoba.

A Community Vision

- Spearhead a movement drawing from all disciplines, and addiction and mental health, to help define out-of-control sexual behaviour on a continuum and all terminology associated within that behaviour to be included in the DSM-VI.

Talk to Us!

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See more online: srwc-mb.ca

¹ Gaps And Opportunities In Addressing Sexual Health In Manitoba (2016) Andrea Shalay, MA; Noah Star, MMFT