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Pre-Valentine's Day Special

Release!

Bring Pleasure into Sex Education to Save Lives

Interventions that prioritise pleasure not danger or disease will increase safer sex

Friday 11th February 2022 — New research shows that sexual health programs that include sexual desire and sexual pleasure can improve knowledge and attitudes around sex, as well as condom use compared to those that do not. The data which was published in advance of Valentine's Day, by the World Health Organisation [WHO] and [The Pleasure Project](#), the leading global advocate for pleasure based sexual health, was published in the open access journal PLOS ONE.

The extensive global analysis of evidence spans 2005-2020 and is dominated by studies from the USA, but also finds evidence from Brazil, Spain, South Africa, the UK, Nigeria, Mexico and Singapore. Overall, it finds that incorporating pleasure in health programs can have positive effects on attitudes and safer sex behaviour. This has long been an avoided topic in sexual health and sex education. The research recommends redesigning sexual education and health intervention approaches to focus on how to

achieve pleasurable safer sex, or learn condom use skills that focus on people's ability to feel pleasure and desire, and overall acknowledge that sexual experiences can and should be pleasurable.

Forty years from the start of the AIDS pandemic 4000 people are still infected with HIV every day. According [to WHO](#) there are also a million sexually transmitted infections acquired every day in the world, the majority without symptoms. Yet the billions of dollars spent around the world each year on sexual and reproductive health and rights services programs fail to address the fundamental reasons people have sex, but rather focus on fear and danger to prevent disease and death.

We can have safer sex if we know how to have good sex.

Researchers from WHO's Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research, The Pleasure Project and colleagues state that continuing to avoid pleasure in sexual health and education risks misdirecting or ineffectively using resources and call for a fundamental rethink of how programs are oriented to reduce infections and save lives.

This fresh evidence comes as the world takes stock of the COVID pandemic, increasing access to explicit media online and the explosion of the sex toy industry. People are asking more searching questions on what they want from their sex lives, tired of intimidating and out of date sex education.

Quotes

'Pleasure is arguably the most powerful motivating factor for having sex and yet has been absent from sex education or sexual health interventions. Evidence now shows that it is more effective and prevents more unsafe sex to talk about pleasure. This has been an irrational blind spot that is not supported by scientific evidence. We know now that we can have safer sex if we know how to have good sex.'

Anne Philpott, Founder of The Pleasure Project, paper co-author

'Sexual health education and services have traditionally promoted safer sex practices by focusing on risk reduction and preventing disease, without acknowledging how safer sex can also promote intimacy, pleasure, consent, and wellbeing. This review provides a simple message: programmes which better reflect the reasons people have sex – including for pleasure – see better health outcomes. The hope is that these results galvanize the sexual and reproductive health and rights community to promote services that educate and equip users to engage in sex that is safe, consensual, and pleasurable.'

Dr Lianne Gonsalves, World Health Organization, paper co-author

Release End

Press-only preview: <https://plos.io/3FQbSN9>

In your coverage please use this URL to provide access to the freely available article in PLOS ONE:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0261034>Link

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Image Caption: An illustration about the benefits of sexual pleasure and its link to safe sex

Image Credit: Ipsita Divedi (The Pleasure Project), CC-BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Image Link: <https://plos.io/3KWgBk2>

Citation: Zaneva M, Philpott A, Singh A, Larsson G, Gonsalves L (2022) What is the added value of incorporating pleasure in sexual health interventions? A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLoS ONE 17(2): e0261034. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0261034>

Author Countries: India, Sweden, Switzerland. U.K.,

Additional resources;

The Pleasure Project

The Pleasure Project is the leading global voice on pleasure based sexual health, building bridges between the public health world and the pleasure and sex industry, and help to develop the evidence base for a sex-positive and pleasure-based approach to sexual health and rights. Since 2004, The Pleasure Project has '*put the sexy into safer sex, because sex education is rarely sexy and erotica rarely safe*' with the aim of getting sex educators embracing desire, joy, happiness, and pleasure when it comes to sex education. The Pleasure Project has been awarded the World Association for Sexual Health Award for Excellence and Innovation in Sexuality Education 2021 and will accept this award at their global congress.

Pleasure Based Sexual Health Definition

A pleasure-based approach is one that celebrates sex, sexuality and the joy and wellbeing that can be derived from these, and creates a vision of good sex built on sexual rights. It focuses on sensory, mental, physical and sensual pleasure to enable individuals to understand, consent to, and gain control over their own bodies and multi-faceted desires. Well-being, safety, pleasure, desire and joy are the objectives of a programme with a pleasure-based approach. This approach measures empowerment, agency, and self-efficacy by whether or not an individual has been enabled to know what they want, and can ask for it, and request this of others, in relation to their sexuality, desires and pleasure. Full reference [here](#).

Sexual Pleasure Declaration from The World Association of Sexual Health [WAS]

WAS ratified their Sexual Pleasure Declaration at this World Congress in Cape Town/Virtual on the 10th September 2021 urging the world's sexual health providers and sex educators

to embrace pleasure as a core element of sexual health and as critical to the global populations well-being.

[Full text](#)

[Technical Guide](#)

Funding

The Research was funded by [The Case for Her](#) a philanthropic investment portfolio that addresses underserved women's health issues such as menstruation, sexual health and pleasure. The Case for Her provided funding to MZ as an independent consultant in order to carry out a review with high methodological rigor. Funding was not conditional on or tied to results.

Quote from The Case for Her:

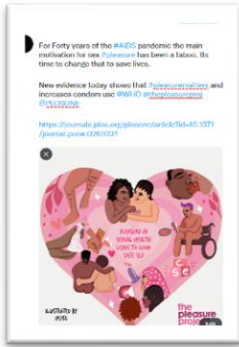
"Rigorous proof that teaching people what they want to know opens avenues to teaching them what they need to know is long overdue. This study strengthens the evidence that pleasure-based sex education is an effective method of improving knowledge and changing attitudes around sex."

Social Media

#Pleasurematters

Twitter @thepleasureproj

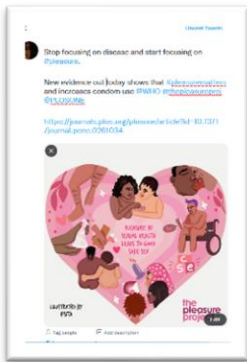
Instagram: the_pleasureproject



For Forty years of the #AIDS pandemic the main motivation for sex #pleasure has been a taboo. It is time to change that to save lives.

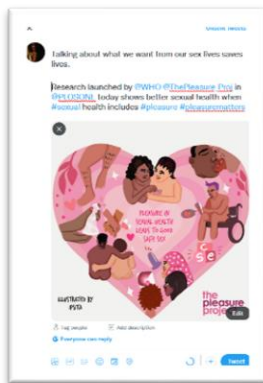
New evidence today shows that #pleasurematters and increases condom use @WHO @thepleasureproj @PLOSONE

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0261034>



Stop focusing on disease and start focusing on #pleasure. New evidence today shows that #pleasurematters and increases condom use @WHO @thepleasureproj @PLOSONE

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0261034>



Talking about what we want from our sex lives saves lives. Research launched by @WHO @ThePleasure_Proj in @PLOSONE today shows better sexual health when #sexual health includes #pleasure #pleasurematters

Twitter Tags

@thepleasureproj @PLOSONE @WHO @thecaseforher