CYBERSEXOLOGY: SEXUALITY AND THE INTERNET

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Sexuality education and sexual counselling have traditionally been conducted face to face. It is however no longer possible for the professions to ignore the technological advances of the cyber century. Global population statistics indicate that 16.7% of the world is connected to the internet (http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm). In Asia 10.8% are connected (representing 36.4% of total global users).

Cyber-counselling:

On-line sex counselling (cyber counselling, e-therapy, Web-counselling) is conducted by email, chat rooms and videoconferencing. A Google search for 'sex counselling on line' resulted in 10,600,000 results. Few of the sites were offered by recognised organisations and few specified the qualifications and affiliations of the counsellors. None of the recognised sexological associations were picked in this initial search. Clearly there is a need for sex therapists to be informed and educated in this area regardless of whether they practice it or not.

Cyber-learning:

Similarly, a search for 'online sex education' yielded 32,600,000 hits with no reputed courses listed among the first 20. Changing the term to 'online sexual health' made little difference. On-line learning in sexual health has been shown to be feasible and practical and when structured correctly, provides users access to global expertise and information in a safe environment (http://www.usyd.edu.au/sexualhealth/). It also provides a forum for adult learning in a flexible format in terms of time, place and content.

Online counselling therapy and education is an integral part of the world we live in and we as sexologist need to grasp the opportunity. Our training programs, supervision processes and professional web sites need to reflect this.