

Change in sexual attraction and sexual partnership within the individual transition process in transwomen

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Introduction:

Male to female (MtF) gender affirming surgery (GAS) comprises the resection of the testes and the erectile tissue and formation of a functional and aesthetic vaginal cavity capable for sexual intercourse with a sensitive neoclitoris. Interviews after GAS mostly refer to surgical outcomes and complications, subjective satisfaction and general or health related quality of life (QoL). Aspects of sexuality however have often been neglected.

Material and methods:

In total 158 trans*-women (median age 49.5 years), who had undergone MtF GAS at the Department of Urology of the University Hospital Essen between 1995 and 2015, were surveyed using open questions and validated questionnaires (e.g. sexual orientation questionnaire FSO, Kinsey-Scale, partnership questionnaire short form PFB-K). Median time since surgery was 6.6 years. Results of the PFB-K were compared with a non-transsexual cohort.

Results:

Respondents stated that their overall QoL improved steadily during their individual transition process (coming out [CO] – start hormone intake – surgery – last four weeks), which was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). At the time of survey (SUR) a total of 96.2% perceived themselves as female or rather female. Pursuant to the Kinsey-Scale 30.6% of participants were exclusively heterosexual, 31.8% were bisexual and 22.3% were exclusively homosexual referring to their perceived gender. Sexual attraction changed in 23.6% after start of hormone replacement therapy

and in 31.3% after GAS. Sexual attraction only to men was 11.5% at CO and 24.8% at SUR. In contrast exclusive attraction to women was 45.9% (CO) and 25.5% (SUR) respectively. In the same manner the rate of sexual relationships only to men changed from 11.5% (CO) to 24.2% (SUR) and from 52.2% (CO) to 28.0% (SUR) regarding relationships only to women. Whereas the proportion of women without any sexual attraction (8.9% CO vs. 7.6% SUR) remained at a constant level, the percentage of those who felt attracted by both males

and females increased from 3.8% (CO) to 12.1% (SUR). At the time of interrogation nearly half of women (46.5%) lived in a firm relationship of whom 43.5% were allied with the same partner since coming out. In total 35.0% were partnered with a woman (3.2% with a trans*-woman) and 17.2% with a man (1.3% with a trans*-man). The women in the study population were significantly more satisfied with their partnership (according to PFB-K) compared to women of a non-transsexual cohort (mean 20.6 versus 18.4; $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion:

In contrast to a rather stable gender identity we found a distinct fluidity of sexual orientation and change in sexual relationships during transition process. Sexual attraction does not necessarily reflect sexual contacts. Satisfaction with partnership was higher compared to a non-transsexual cohort.

