

Tracking Mentions of Pelvic Organ Prolapse and Related Sexual Concerns in Books

Pelvic organ prolapses (POP) are estimated to affect 50% of all cisgender women over the age of fifty (APOP website). Other people —younger and/or of various genders — can also experience this condition.

The following chart is a rough survey of a number of sexological, sex therapy, sexual self-help, and adult sex education textbooks in my library. This survey is an effort to understand awareness or lack of awareness given to (1) the general topic of pelvic organ prolapse and related symptoms and (2) the specific topic of how these conditions affect the sexual concerns and function of those who suffer from POP.

The books are listed in chronological order, oldest first. I checked indexes for references to: pelvic organ prolapses, cystocele, rectocele, prolapsed uterus, urinary incontinence, dyspareunia, painful intercourse, uterus, hysterectomy, and other related search terms.

Authors	Publication
Kinsey et al	<i>Sexual Behavior in the Human Female</i> 1953 Dyspareunia not in index. Pelvic organ prolapses not in index. Urination after sexual activity (p. 637). Uterus, in orgasm — “...the upper end of the uterus goes into rhythmic contractions of considerable frequency whenever there is sexual arousal” (p 663).
Masters & Johnson	<i>Human Sexual Response</i> 1966 “ Aging Female,” Chapter 15 (pp. 223-247). No mention of uterine prolapse. Cystocele not in index. Dyspareunia — no mention of prolapses (pp. 240-241). Rectocele, effects of — in the context of “seminal-fluid-wastage” in the vagina (pp.82-83) and urinary loss (p.228). Urinary loss, in coition — includes case of 57 year old woman with rectocele and *cystoeurethrocele (p. 228). “Uterus,” Chapter 8 devoted to the uterus, but no mention of uterine prolapse in index (pp. 111-126). [*Not in Tabers Encyclopedic Medical Dictionary, 20th Ed. An old term for cystocele?]

Authors	Publication	
Masters & Johnson	<i>Human Sexual Inadequacy</i> 1970	Hysterectomy, dyspareunia after (pp. 286-287). Pelvic organ prolapses and urinary incontinence not in index. However phrase “everything is falling out” found on p. 278. Uterus mentioned in “resolution phase” (pp. 78 & 79).
Sherfey	<i>The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality</i> 1972	No index. Prolapse not included in glossary.
Hartman & Fithian	<i>Treatment of Sexual Dysfunction—A Bio-Psychosocial Approach</i> 1972	Hysterectomy not in index. Pelvic organ prolapses not in index. Pain (as “non sexual stimulation” in questionnaire, p. 62; due to vaginal lesions and or lack of lubrication, p. 78; vaginal pain during sexological exam, p. 81; levels of pain compared to levels of orgasm intensity, pp. 82-83; discomfort from penis hitting fecal matter in lower bowel, as felt in the vagina [a possible reference also to rectocele? If so, not stated.], p. 84; due to vaginal lesions or tears, p. 86; discomfort in vagina, p. 90; episiotomy and episiotomy scars, p. 93; vaginal pain during sexological examination, p. 94; irritation of penis, p. 95; women who report painful intercourse, p. 168; female superior position as a help to painful intercourse with male partner, p. 190.) Sex history (pp. 29-55) does not ask about pelvic floor prolapses or Kegels and “extensive trauma in childbirth” (p. 83). Urinary stress incontinence (pp. 83, 87n). Uterus not in index.
Downer, Gage, Chalker, et al. Federation of Women’s Health Centers	<i>A New View of a Woman’s Body</i> 1991	Hysterectomy (pp. 19, 105, 109, 119, 137, 147). Pelvic organ prolapses not in index. Urinary incontinence not in index. Uterus (pp. 50). Uterus and ligaments (pp. 67, 72). “Uterus, sexual response” (p. 55) — “...its lining becomes swollen with blood and it balloons upwards, enlarging the vagina. Some women actually feel it contract pleurably.”

Authors	Publication	
Doress-Worters & Siegal Boston Women's Health Collective	<i>Ourselves, Growing Older</i> 1994	Cystocele (pp. 105, 107, 306). Hysterectomy and sexuality (pp. 90, 316, 318-319, 330). Pessary (p. 309). "Plastic" – uterine suspension sling (p. 326). Rectocele (p. 34). Urinary incontinence (pp. 256-257, 300-313, 492r-493r). Uterine prolapse (pp. 105, 306, 309, 311, 320, 325-326). Illustration of prolapses (p. 304).
Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny	<i>Human Sexuality</i> (textbook) 1995	Dyspareunia not in index. Hysterectomy in the context of abortion (pp. 190-191). Pelvic organ prolapses not in index. Urinary stress incontinence (p. 81). Uterus – many index citations, nothing on prolapse.
Block	<i>Sex Over 50</i> 1999	Hysterectomy (pp. 235-237). Prolapse (p. 60). Uterus (p. 70).
Chalker	<i>The Clitoral Truth</i> 2000	Dyspareunia not in index. Hysterectomy (p. 12). Pelvic floor muscles (pp. 33, 46, 49, 55, 102, 104, 125, 169, 205). Pelvic organ prolapses not in index. Urinary stress incontinence not in index. Uterus (pp. 33, 48, 55, 57, 68, 199-201, 205, 207, 209).
Ellison	<i>Women's Sexualities</i> 2000	Hysterectomy – a brief mention in a list of other concerns (p. 289).
Kemp & Kemp	<i>Older Couples: New Romances</i> 2002	Nothing in indexes.

Authors	Publication	
Foley, Kope, Sugrue	<i>Sex Matters for Women</i> 2002	Hysterectomy not in index. Pelvic floor muscle pain (pp. 168-172). Prolapse (pp. 163, 168). Uterine pain (p. 97) “Vaginal prolapse” (p. 168).
Winks & Senabs	<i>The Good Vibrations Guide to Sex</i> 2002	Dyspareunia not in index. Neither is painful intercourse. Hysterectomy (pp. 60, 103, 163). Prolapse not in index. Uterus (p. 60).
Butler & Lewis	<i>The New Love and Sex After 60</i> 2002	Hysterectomy (pp. 60, 160). Uterine prolapse (p. 161)
Britton	<i>The Art of Sex Coaching</i> 2005	Dyspareunia, painful sex (pp. 142-162). Hysterectomy (p. 200). Pelvic floor prolapses not in index. Not mentioned in the list of female medical concerns on p. 233.
Blonna & Levitan	<i>Healthy Sexuality 1st Ed. (Special edition for San Francisco State)</i> 2006	Prolapse not in index or listed in “common disorders.” Sexual pain (p. 373).
Price	<i>Better Than I Expected—Straight Talk About Sex After Sixty</i> 2006	Nothing.
Komisaruk, Beyer-Flores & Whipple	Science of Orgasm 2006	Hysterectomy, sex steroids after surgery (p. 178-179). Hysterectomy, controversy of effect on sexual feelings (p. 233-235).

Authors	Publication	
Crooks & Baur	<i>Our Sexuality, 11th Ed.</i> (Textbook) 2008	Hysterectomy (p. 77). Intercourse pain — “...tears the ligaments that hold the uterus in the pelvic cavity and such damage can result in pain during coitus” (pp. 408-410). Pelvic floor muscles and Kegels — no mention of prolapses (pp. 58-59). Pelvic organ prolapse not in index.
Bruess & Greenberg	Sexuality Education 2009	Pelvic organ prolapse not in index. Hysterectomy as sterilization (p. 87). Uterus (p. 75).
Joannides	Guide to Getting it On V. 8.0 2015	Dyspareunia, Chapter “Hurts” (p. 755). Hysterectomy, and sex (p. 1033). Pelvic floor muscles (p. 759-760).

The overall impression is that in such books, information about POP and its sexual impacts are ignored, fragmented, and usually are not connected to a wholistic view of the impact of POP and symptoms (as well as surgical intervention) on the person’s sexual health and concerns. The authors themselves, though experts in a wide range of human sexuality topics, seem to lack knowledge or concern about POP. Readers with POP have trouble finding their symptoms and problems in such books.

That these conditions usually involve cis-gender women and other people over the age of 50 is also of concern.

Though POP is a set of medical conditions, non-medical aspects such as body shame, impacts on relationships, anger or sorrow, sexual dysfunction, and quality of life issues —all can and should be recognized and addressed. There is opportunity here for human sexuality professionals to educate themselves about POP, then to bring focused attention to assessing, informing and addressing the needs of clients with these symptoms and conditions.

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APOP Website: www.pelvicorganprolapsesupport.org

dr.amymarshsexologist@gmail.com