

# Going new ways as a nurse

Presentation of a project which promote  
Sexual Counseling for cancer patients and their partner  
and education trainings for nurses  
related to intimacy and sexual issues

*17h SASRO Meeting Davos  
5 July 2013*

*Impulsi*

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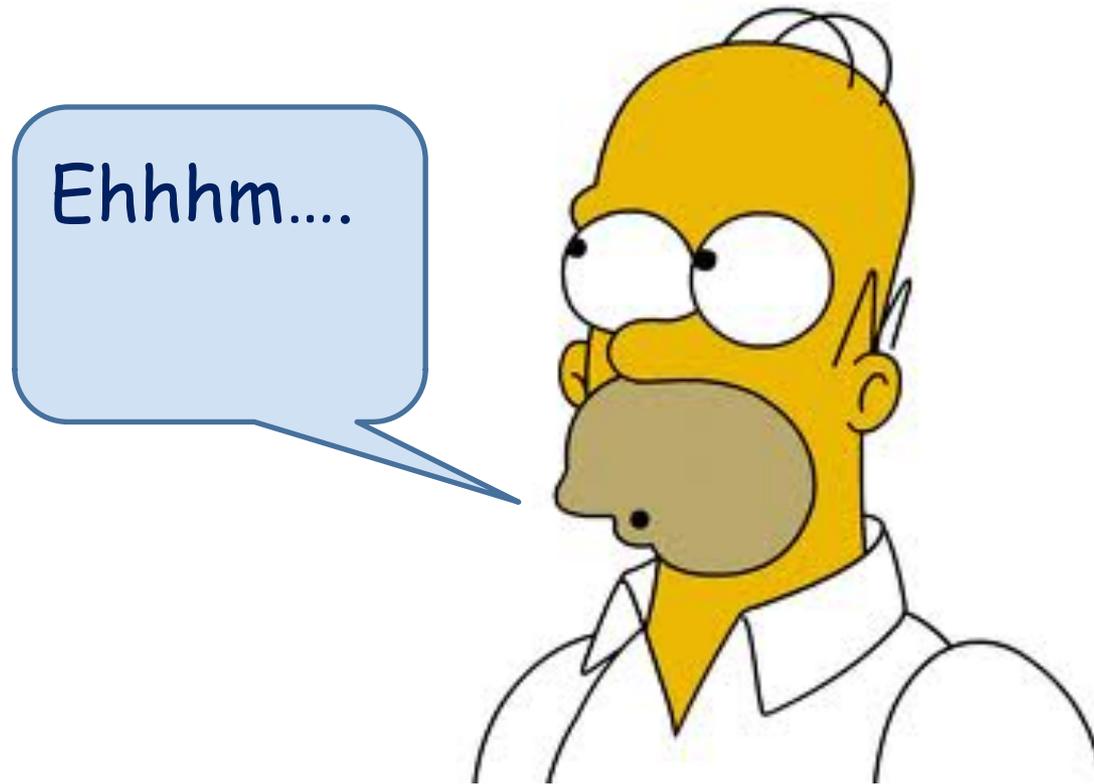
## Project aims

- to **offer support** for patients and their partner
- to **make aware**, to **inform** and to **educate** nurses and other healthcare professionals (in oncology)

**...related to intimacy and sexual issues**

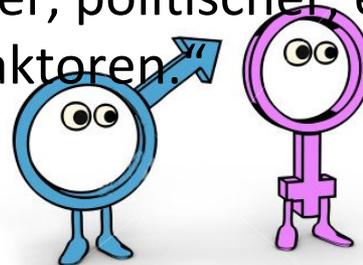
**To create a “safe place” where to talk about**

# What's sexuality?



**„Sexualität bezieht sich auf einen zentralen Aspekt des Menschseins über die gesamte Lebensspanne hinweg, der das**

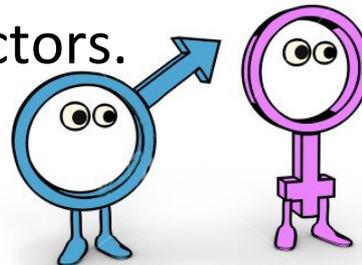
- biologische Geschlecht, die Geschlechtsidentität, die Geschlechterrolle, sexuelle Orientierung, Lust, Erotik, Intimität und Fortpflanzung einschließt.
- Sie wird erfahren und drückt sich aus in Gedanken, Fantasien, Wünschen, Überzeugungen, Einstellungen, Werten, Verhaltensmustern, Praktiken, Rollen und Beziehungen.
- Während Sexualität all diese Aspekte beinhaltet, werden nicht alle ihre Dimensionen jederzeit erfahren oder ausgedrückt.
- Sexualität wird beeinflusst durch das Zusammenwirken biologischer, psychologischer, sozialer, wirtschaftlicher, politischer, ethischer, rechtlicher, religiöser und spiritueller Faktoren.



(WHO, 2006)

## **Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life**

- and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.
- Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.
- While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed.
- Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.



(WHO, 2006)

# WHY “Impulsi”?

In generally, in our society, **intimacy and sexuality are underestimated aspects** of human being.

Talking about this topics **creates often discomfort.**

I was able to listen, but  
**not to support with competence.**



Training in Clinical Sexology, Milan/Italy



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# WHY THE PROJECT ?

Nurses or physicians **rarely talked about sexual issues** with patients or other professionals.

**It's difficult to express needs and thoughts**

- for patients
- for nurses and other healthcare professionals

**Scientific literature** about “sexuality and cancer” increased and highlighted patient needs and barriers

In Southern Switzerland  
**didn't exist any specific sexual counseling for cancer patients**



Project idea started in 2011

# PROJECT WORK

**First contact February 2011**

**Ente ospedaliero Cantonale EOC** (multisite public hospital) **and Institute of Oncology in Southern Switzerland IOSI**

Not possible at this time to start a project.

# PROJECT WORK

## First contact in January 2011

**Lega Ticinese contro il Cancro LTC** (Cancer League of Southern Switzerland)

- Autumn 2011: 3 Info-events in the different parts of Ticino
- October 2011: Collaboration project “onco-reha” : questionnaire area sexuality, Sexual Counseling for patients

## From Gennuary 2012 – December 2012

4 patients, 6 hours of counseling

- January 2012: LTC offers Sexual Counseling for cancer patients and partner

## From January 2012 – December 2012

1 patient, 1 hour

- February 2012: Training for collaborators LTC

# PROJECT WORK

**First contact October 2011**

**Dr. med. Enrico Roggero, Oncology and Heamatology Outpatient Unit , Bellinzona,  
Southern Switzerland**

- Since January 2012: **Sexual Counseling integrated in this unit 1-2 afternoons a month**

**From January 2012 – December 2012**

9 patients, 36 hours of counseling

# PROJECT WORK

## First contact September 2011

**Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana SUPSI** (Professional University School of Southern Switzerland)

- Since October 2011: **Lessions related to sexuality and cancer patients for Nursing Students**

## First contact March 2012

**Scuola Specializzata Superiore in Cure Infermieristiche della Svizzera Italiana**  
(Nursing School of Southern Switzerland)

- Since March 2012: **Lessions related to sexuality and cancer patients or to other chronic deseases**

# PROJECT WORK

## First contact January 2011

**Associazione Svizzera Infermiere e Infermieri ASI/SBK** (Swiss Nursing Association)

- Since January 2013: **Lessions related to intimacy/sexual issues and nursing/careing**

## First contact May 2012

**Croce Rossa Ticino, Settore Corsi Operatori Socio-Sanitari**

(Red Cross Southern Switzerland, Educational Programs for Healthcare Professionals)

- Since June 2013: **Lessions related to intimacy/sexuality and nursing/careing, prevention**



# BARRIERS

patients and healthcare professionals

- **Taboo inside a taboo:** it's just difficult to talk about sex for people in health...
- **Permission to work as a Sexual Counselor:** usually asked by doctors or psychologists, there was no nurse before ! It takes 6 months
- **Culture and religious influences:** fear to be judged, fear to admit to need support, Catholicism, .....
- **Something new:** What's that? How does it work? Why exists?
- **Economic aspects:** Sexual Counseling is not reimbursable by the health insurance

# A.D., 72 years, male

- married, retired construction worker, a very active person
- 1 son, 1 daughter , since 5 year grandpa
- December 2008 Rectum Adeno Carcinoma
- January 2009 surgery: tumor removal and stoma
- January 2009 – April 2009 Chemiotherapy and Radiotherapy (pelvic)
- April 2009 surgery: stoma removed

## 1° Sexual Counseling in May 2012:

Mr. AD suffered since the last surgery (3 years) of fecal incontinence during the orgasm (any form of sexual activity). He was very sad and felt ashamed. Sexual desire persisted, no erection problems, but he tried to avoid sexual intercourse in the last 3 years.

## Sexual Counseling approach:

1. Emotional support and information/education
2. Patient learned to insert an anal tampon before sexual intercourse
3. Physiotherapy : reeducation of pelvic musculature

**After 3 month Mr. AD had again sex, frequency: 1/week  
anal tampon used only in penetrative activity  
with great pleasure and satisfaction**

# FURTHER DEVELOPEMENTS

- **Institute of Oncology of Southern Switzerland IOSI:** soon will start a collaboration; Sexual Counseling for patients/partner and support for healthcare professionals IOSI underlined, and particularly Monica Bianchi (Nurse Head), that specific competences related to intimacy and sexual issues are necessary, but also knowledge and competences in nursing!
- **Interdisciplinary research project:** should start in autumn/winter 2013/14
- **Leiga Ticinese contro il Cancro LTC:** meeting in July 2013  
promotion sexual counseling and information/education events for patients or healthcarer



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**THANK YOU!!**



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