



A Pill for Libido. Really?

By Kalpana (Rose) M. Kumar, M.D.

As an internist who sees hundreds of women in the second half of life, I am all too familiar with women's waning libidos. Having gone through menopause myself, I have personally experienced the power that changing hormones have on many psychological and bodily functions that the younger me took for granted. As an integrative physician, I am always searching for causes of symptoms and for natural and integrative ways to treat and heal them. Our society sees a waning libido as a pathological symptom. Viewing our aging bodies as pathological is where our problem truly lies.

Our collective maturity level in America can truly be seen as 'adolescent'. We are a society with many compulsions. We seek fast ways to manipulate the body, to manage symptoms, and to regain youth. We want pills as substitutes for inner work, diets for rapid weight loss, and shots to stop menstruation considered inconvenient by many. We are addicted to an ideology that has proven not to work over the past three decades. Somehow, we are unable to make the shift to a more mature way of thinking. Industries that support these compulsions make a lot of money. The money itself becomes an incentive to keep the compulsions in place.

We have promoted the 'anti-aging' ideology for nearly 3 decades. We have yet to find a way to turn back the clock. We are fearful of aging because we lack respect for process, and have not created a way to mark and consecrate our life stages from a place of reverence. Our society normalizes this. Mother Nature, in all of Her wisdom, marches on in time. It is about time we find a way to gracefully honor the rhythms of the natural order of life and learn how not to resist aging due to our adolescent fear.

A woman's libido has many facets that influence it – hormonal, psychological, emotional, and spiritual. Hormones have powerful effects on the biological nature of sexual desire. When we are young and fertile, our hormone surges are aligned with the zeal to procreate. In other words, the desire for sex is aligned with Nature. This is a powerful force that underlies our libidos when we are young. As we age our hormones change, and we are less able to procreate - and Nature is less supportive of our libidos. Women in their mid-40s complain about their waning libido, their changing body, and mostly their newly discovered need for balance. They feel depleted after half a life of caring for others. Energetic depletion, alongside changing biology creates less desire for sex. There is a greater desire for more intimacy, spiritual and emotional fulfillment, and the restoration of balance both a woman's body and life.

By our 50's, most of us have experienced enough pain and difficulties to last us a lifetime. These experiences are meant to serve as catalysts for inner growth and self-discovery. In midlife we must move out of the compulsion to 'please the world' and into an inner place of authentic connection. We must learn how to be true to ourselves. For us to find meaning and not feel victimized by our past requires hard work and a desire to seek. The process of seeking itself deepens our ability to be intimate and fulfilled. In my medical practice, I find that women, who are committed to 'seeking' as they age, feel more fulfilled with intimacy, rather than the sex act alone. They are able to more readily accept their

changing bodies. Sexual pleasure to them feels different, in some ways more fulfilling, even though their libidos may not be as heightened as in youth. The irony is that they are the ones who feel more sexual fulfillment than those who continue on the treadmill defined by the collective, with expectations of eternal youth.

Because our society has glorified youth and the sex act in favor of aging and intimacy, as we age, society expects us to perform both physically and sexually similar to when we were young, but with limited success. Our aging bodies have different needs: the need for a pure diet, exercise, work/life balance, attention to inner process, and - one that we have not yet normalized in our society - a search for meaning. The spiritual aspects of ourselves call to us more powerfully and with greater zeal as we age. Our physical bodies also require more attention. Continuing the unhealthy diet of our younger years, does not nourish our changing bodies, and many of the lifestyle choices that have gained traction do not support our emotional or physical bodies. This level of self-awareness needs to be paramount as we age if we desire to achieve a state of true health, which should no longer be defined by a 'hard body' or a 'boundless sex life'.

For men, Viagra and Cialis do not fulfill these needs. The ability to hold an erection for a longer time is not an adequate substitute for health, meaning, or intimacy.

Our society is struggling with the choices it has collectively made. Frankly, our collective ideology is in contrast to the laws of Nature. In other words, it goes against the laws of Nature. Due to the decades of traction behind our unnatural ways of life, we continue to pump out pills as substitutes for what is missing at deeper levels of our being. The woman's libido pill Addyi will not be able to offer what women consider as sexual fulfillment – namely: intimacy, meaning, and a renewed relationship with themselves and their partners. The risk of life-threatening side effects alone is not worth taking a libido pill.

As we age and seek deeper levels of meaning, biology (not surprisingly) follows suit. Not necessarily with the same intensity as it did during youth, but our aging physical bodies respond to emotional and spiritual depth differently than when we were young. The zeal to live from depth is what Nature supports as we age, in favor of the zeal to procreate as in youth.

At this time we do not need yet another pill with more side effect casualties left at the altar of our flawed ideology. We need to reframe our collective consciousness and normalize the necessity for healthy aging as defined by physical, emotional, and spiritual health. This is a much more powerful way for us to live and will go much further in our level of fulfillment, both sexually and spiritually, than any pill can ever offer.

©September, 2015 Kalpana (Rose) M. Kumar M.D., CEO and Medical Director, The Ommani Center for Integrative Medicine, Pewaukee, WI. Dr, Kumar is currently accepting new patients, call 262.695.5311 to schedule an appointment. www.ommanicenter.com