From Sexual Abstinence | To Unconsummated Marriages
Unconsummated Marriages

Sexual Abstinence
- Involuntary
- Legally mandated
- Voluntary
- Chastity before marriage

Complete
Partial

righteousness, purity and pride

May sometimes lead to

Unconsummated Relationships

White Marriages

Demonization
Shyness
low self-esteem
lack of knowledge
incompetence

Fear
Guilt
Dirty
Wrong
Sinful

♂

♀

unconsummated marriages
Definition | Incidence
Unconsummated Marriages

- DEFINITION

• Failure to perform successful sexual intercourse between a (married) man and woman.

Clinical definition

• “Disorder that affects a couple, who, although they attempt on a regular basis (at least once a week) to achieve penile-vaginal penetration, never succeeds over a significative period”.

Unconsummated Marriages

**INCIDENCE**

- Their exact incidence is unknown.

- Highly depends on the culture of origin:
  - it is thought to be more common in traditional cultures\(^1\):
    - religious rules.
    - cultural taboos.
  - but they are not exclusive to those societies and can be seen in less traditional ones.

- Incidence:
  - would range from **8 to 17%**\(^1\) of the people attending sexual health clinics in non-western countries.
  - could account for **2 to 3%**\(^2\) of the couples seeking sexual help in western countries.

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Unconsummated Marriages

- **AGE AT DIAGNOSIS**

  Diagnosis is generally expected at early ages:

  - in more traditional cultures, family and/or acquaintances ask for proof of intercourse (handkerchief proof).
    
    patients will seek help after few failures.

  - in western countries, age at first sexual experience with a partner is precocious. The inability to perform intercourse

    patients are thought to seek help earlier.

  ▪ **However:** age at diagnosis of UCM can be delayed. In Michetti’s study\(^1\) (2008-2012)

    mean age at first consult was 37 years (± 4.9)/ [♂ 40y (± 4.4)/ ♀ 35y (± 4.7)]

    while mean age at wedding was 32.4 years (♂ 33.3y/ ♀ 31.3y)

    discrepancy of five years between first attempt and consultation.

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Etiology | UCM
Unconsummated Marriages

- HISTORICALLY

Since the 70s, UCM were thought to exclusively relate either to:

- Vaginismus.
- Erectile dysfunction.
- Premature ejaculation.

Gender difficulty and highly (female) mechanistic causes

But there are some discrepancies about the incidence of those etiologies according the studies.

## Unconsummated Marriages

### ETIOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female causes of UCM</th>
<th>64%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vaginismus</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phobias and low sexual desire</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combinations</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male causes of UCM</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organic causes</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erectile dysfunction</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premature ejaculation</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual phobia</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined causes</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gindin & al. 2002*

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<td>Organic ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of penile rigidity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premature ejaculation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Michetti & al. 2014*

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06/02/15  Dr Pierre MARTIN-VAUZOUR  9
## Unconsummated Marriages

**ETIOLOGY**

Michetti & al. 2014  
24 couples  

Mean age at first consult was 37 years (± 4.9)/ [♂ 40y (± 4.4)/♀ 35y (± 4.7)]

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>♀</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you have previous sexual expérience, with or without penetration before wedding?</td>
<td>No 54%</td>
<td>No 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever attended a sexual education program during your school career?</td>
<td>No 87%</td>
<td>No 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever consulted any scientific informative source (internet, books, magazines) on anatomy-physiological contents concerning sexuality?</td>
<td>Yes 58%</td>
<td>Yes 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever look closely your partner’s genitalia?</td>
<td>No 17%</td>
<td>No 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you even seen an illustration/video of a complete sexual intercourse?</td>
<td>No 46%</td>
<td>No 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel uncomfortable showing you naked?</td>
<td>Yes 42%</td>
<td>Yes 46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Unconsummated Marriages

## ETIOLOGY

Michetti & al. 2014  |  24 couples  
---|---

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Are you afraid to feel pain during penetration?</td>
<td>Yes 25%</td>
<td>Yes 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did ideological or religious beliefs influence your sexuality before wedding?</td>
<td>No 50%</td>
<td>No 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been engaged and how long married before the first consult?</td>
<td>&lt; 12 months: 16%</td>
<td>13-36 months: 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;36 months: 42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was your motivation to ask for a consult direct or indirect?</td>
<td>Indirect 33%</td>
<td>Indirect 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who in your couple asked for help?</td>
<td>men: 12%</td>
<td>women: 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>both: 25%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Unconsummated | Marriages

- BEYOND ORGANIC TROUBLES

- Partners of unconsummated marriages are often struggling with:
  - Lack of education and information about sex and sexual life.
  - Lack of interest regarding those matters.
  - Feeling uncomfortable with nudity.
  - Negative cognitive anticipations about intercourse (25% of men are afraid of feeling pain).
  - Shame about their incompetence.

- Even in the absence of ideological or religious beliefs.

FOR WOMEN AND MEN.

Assessment | UCM
Unconsummated Marriages

ASSESSMENT

In search of:

- Mechanistic causes.
- Organic or psychologic comorbidity.
- Current sexual life.
- Coping strategies until then.
- Knowledge and false beliefs about:
  - anatomy,
  - physiology,
  - sexual reactions in ♀ and ♂.
- Personal history.

In both bride and groom (Who are often not so newly “wedded”)

Physical examination

± Additional checking

Questioning & Anamnesis

The more we know the more we can help.
Care | UCM
Unconsummated | Marriages

▪ SEVERAL STRATEGIES HAVE BEEN PROPOSED¹:

• Dynamic psychotherapy (Davidson & Iftach 1976).
• Hypnotherapy (Degun & Degun 1982,.., Delmonte 1988).
• Couple psychotherapy (Grafeille 1986).
• Dramatization, bioenergetic (Barns, Perry 1985).
• Psychocorporal techniques & cognitive procedures (Granero & Imparali 1997).
• Suggestions + relaxation + desensitizing fantasies.
• Masters & Johnson’s behavioral desensitizing programs (1975).
• Kegel exercises with biofeedback.
• Vaginal dilators (Masters & Johnson 1975; Kaplan 1976; Lo Piccolo 1978).
• Oral antiphobic drugs.
• Oral (PDE5I) and intracavernous (alprostadil) erotogenic drugs.
• ........................................ Hymen resection or posthetomy

Unconsummated Marriages

- WHATEVER THE METHOD APPLIED, LET’S KEEP IN MIND:

  - Couple’s Motivations
  - Sexual health

  - Marriage consumption?
  - Sexual life improvement?
  - Procreation?

  UCM
  - Male/female etiology
  - Partner’s behavior

  - Knowledge about sexuality
  - False beliefs
  - Personal history
  - Comorbidity

  Psychosexual education
  Treating the initial cause(s)
  Progressive confrontation
  Against postponing
Unconsummated | Relationships

- Gay & Lesbian Marriages more and more common in Western Countries.

Lesbian couples seeking help when trying to procreate with artificial insemination.

Gay couples trying to perform anal penetration in a receptive way.

Counseling ± UCM strategies