



american association of sexuality educators, counselors and therapists
1444 I Street, NW • Suite 700 • Washington, DC • 20005 • 202.449.1099 • info@aasect.org

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Contact:

Ian Kerner, PhD, LMFT, CSC
Chair, Public Relations, Media & Advocacy Steering Committee
AASECT
press@aasect.org

FROM A SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE, SEX ADDICTION IS NOT REAL.

Problematic sexual behavior, on the other hand, is very real and consumers need to be protected from sex addiction therapists who are not adequately trained in human sexuality.

Founded in 1967, the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT) has released a historic statement asserting that it:

- 1) Does not find sufficient empirical evidence to support the classification of sex addiction or porn addiction as a mental health disorder and
- 2) Does not find the sexual addiction training, treatment methods and educational pedagogies to be adequately informed by accurate human sexuality knowledge. *Therefore, it is the position of AASECT that linking problems related to sexual urges, thoughts or behaviors to a porn/sexual addiction process cannot be advanced by AASECT as a standard of practice for sexuality education delivery, counseling or therapy.*

As the leading national body of sexuality educators, counselors and therapists, AASECT does, however, recognize that people may experience significant physical, psychological, spiritual and sexual health consequences related to their sexual urges, thoughts or behaviors. Says Douglas Braun-Harvey, LMFT, CGP, CST, one of the authors of the statement, “These are real problems, but sex therapy counseling and education requires a higher standard of sexual science to ensure sexual rights and sexual health. The sex addiction concept is an oversimplification of a complex area of human sexual behavior and is not substantiated by sexual science and sex therapy. I think the most important thing to remember is that there are people who are suffering from their sexual behavior being out of control, but what ends up happening is that the suffering, the fear and the consequences it brings to their careers and families get prematurely and very quickly labeled *sex addiction*.”

AASECT’s statement comes at a time when sex addiction continues to make headlines with former politicians like Anthony Weiner checking into a sex addiction rehabilitation center and the state of Utah and the GOP declaring pornography use to be a public health hazard. In spite of this sense of alarm, the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM–5)* rejected the



diagnosis of sex addiction with the explanation: “To include this as an addiction would require published scientific research that does not exist at this time.”

Adds Russell Stambaugh, PhD, DST, CSTS, another author of the AASECT statement: “The *AASECT Position Statement* is an assertion that the best scientific studies do not currently support the theory that sex can be an addiction directly analogous to cocaine, heroin, alcohol or nicotine. That similar neural pathways may sometimes be shared by sexuality and other sources of pleasure and reward, including those involved in true addictions, reflects correlation but does not establish causation. The scientific evidence is also weak that one will lose erectile function or partner desire from over-use of erotica.”

When contentious topics and cultural conflicts impede sexual education and health care, AASECT may choose to publish position statements to clarify standards to protect consumer sexual health and sexual rights. AASECT has previously published a position statement on the danger of sexual orientation reparative/conversion therapy and the intention is to continue to promote a vision of sexual health that does not unduly pathologize consensual sexual problems.

“The topic of sex addiction has been contentious for many years, with a large body of scientific research indicating that sex addiction has not been well defined or operationalized,” says AASECT President, Debby Herbenick, PhD, MPH, CSE. “Contemporary research indicates that individuals’ problematic sexual behavior may often be better explained by other factors, including a high sex drive, mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety) or culturally influenced guilt or shame.”

Many AASECT therapists regularly see clients for problematic sexual behavior and are trained to compassionately support clients in their work and in ways that are consistent with AASECT’s [Vision of Sexual Health](#).

Please click [here](#) to read the full version of AASECT’s position statement on sex addiction.

For further information, please contact:

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