What is Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology (POG)?

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Objectives

• Define “psychosomatic” and how it applies to women’s health

• Describe specific health issues that are characterized by mind/ body interaction
What is “Psychosomatic”? 

“Psyche” = mind

“Soma” = body

Psychosomatic issues are those that involve an interaction between the mind and the body.
In women’s health, there are many examples of such interactions:

• Situations where mental states influence the course or outcome of pregnancy or disease
• Situations where reproductive hormones influence mood and psychological conditions
• Societal and cultural influences that impact how women experience health and disease
Examples of psychology influencing health/illness

• Childbirth
  – Prior traumatic birth induces anxiety/fear that influences course of current pregnancy

• Infertility
  – Stress may impact normal reproductive function and lead to reduced fertility

• Psycho-oncology
  – Women with depression may recover more slowly from cancer surgery than women with normal mood
Examples of hormones that influence psychology

• Postpartum depression
  – Depression onset coincides with abrupt withdrawal of pregnancy hormones

• Premenstrual dysphoric disorder
  – Mood changes with fluctuations in menstrual hormones

• Sexual dysfunction
  – Some cases of decreased libido linked to hormonal deficiency
Examples of health-related issues that have strong association with mental well-being

- Pregnancy loss and prenatal genetic diagnoses
- Gynecological cancer
- Chronic pelvic pain

May all have major impact on mental health through unpleasant or adverse experiences
“POG” may also refer to “psychosocial” ob/gyn

- Refers to the idea that disease and health should be interpreted and described as a combination of biological, psychological, and social influences
Examples of social problems that may affect women’s health

- Interpersonal violence
- Poverty and access to care
- Substance abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Migration and displacement of refugees
Examples of health experiences impacted by cultural influences

• Pregnancy and Childbirth
  – Management varies from culture to culture

• Sexuality and sexual diversity
  – Behaviors influenced by social norms and cultural acceptance

• Body image and cosmetic gynecology
  – Perception of “normal” defined by social and cultural influences
POG is about interdisciplinary care!

- The intersection of mental and physical aspects of women’s care involves sharing expertise between several fields:
  - Ob/gyns -- Social workers
  - Psychiatrists -- Midwives
  - Psychologists -- Nurses
  - Sociologists -- Genetics counselors
POG affects nearly every aspect of women’s health care in some respect!

• Attention to psychological and social aspects of caring for women enhances the physician-patient relationship and improves the quality of caring.
For further reading: