

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[printer friendly](#)

[download pdf](#)

Published April 15th, 2009

Hot Topic Addresses Women's Issues at Women's Health Center in Lafayette

By Linda U. Foley



L-Katie Rose, R.N. administrative director of Women and Infants Services at Alta Bates Photo Linda Foley

"Have you ever wondered why your sex drive may change with menopause and aging? Have you wondered if there is anything that can be done about those changes? How can you improve your sex life?" These topics of the physiology and psychology of sex were addressed by Risa Kagan, M.D., guest speaker at the event held recently at the Alta Bates Summit Women's Health Center in Lafayette's Mercantile Center. Dr. Kagan—dead ringer for Sigourney Weaver with a sense of humor—is an OB/GYN on staff at Alta Bates with a specialty in menopause medicine and all things associated with that transition in a woman's life.

The second-story suite of offices was filled to capacity with energetic women many of whom appeared of indeterminate age what with today's 60-year olds passing for 40 plus. Nonetheless, it was a safe assumption that the topic of Sex after 50: Keep the Fires Burning was a hot topic. The atmosphere was rife with laughter and introductions with doctors mingling freely. Nibbles and libations added to a girls-night-out atmosphere with a distinct focus.

Katie Rose, R.N., administrative director of Women and Infants Services at Alta Bates, and one of the driving forces behind the Center, gave a brief overview of the well-appointed facility, open since November. She was joined by the other driving force in the fulfillment of the Center, Katarina Lanner-Cusin, M.D., Alta Bates Summit's medical director of Women's Services. "The Center is not just for Alta Bates Summit patients who live east of the tunnel."

The solely women-focused facility aims to address the changing stages of a woman's life which are beautifully interpreted in the artwork by Napa artist Jessel Miller and depicted on the sage-calm walls. I learned that in addition to the basic four stages to a woman's life: baby, child, teen, adult (family/career) there are two added stages—retiree (new directions) and—to my relief—one called "living well."

Living life well at any stage, particularly in later years, includes a healthy and fulfilling sex life. Dr. Kagan's warm and informative presentation identified and verified much of the internal female topography.

Women—not surprisingly—are designed differently than men in terms of the sexual response cycle requiring psychological and physical intimacy and emotions, while men are able to "perform" with "less strings attached." Per Dr. Kagan, "Viagra handles the mechanics but, not the mindset" which elicited commiserative chuckles and comments about wishing that men were in the audience. While women's emotional status remains physically hidden it is obvious where the man stands.

What to do? is the question most women have even after many years of a committed relationship. An excellent article recommended by Dr. Kagan is by Daniel Bergner in NY Times Magazine 1/25/09 What Do Women Want? nytimes.com-search What is Female Desire?

Numerous factors affect sexuality including physiology, psychology, interpersonal relationships and socio-cultural influences. Healthy sexual functioning is affected by numerous determinants: family/work/relationship, stress, anxiety/depression, health of partner and self, developmental experiences e.g. abuse, historical attitude regarding sex, age-related (declining) hormonal changes, use of various medications (anti-depressants) and body image or "hanging skin"—not my favorite description.

The good news is that there are corrective approaches such as testosterone therapy, herbal alternatives, oral or topical preparations and mechanical toys; the bad news is that 1/3 of a woman's life today is spent in post-menopause. However, spirits lifted when we learned that sexual activity in senior living communities is rampant.

Life is good after all!

Alta Bates Summit Women's Health Center, Lafayette
Mercantile, 3595 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Ste. 350, 962-9129

Currently, the Center focuses on two issues: mammography screenings and treatments for pelvic health services.

The state-of-the-art digital imaging used for mammography emits half the radiation of traditional analog mammography. Mammograms are reviewed and patients contacted with results same day. In addition to the expedient process, the "dreaded procedure" takes place in a tranquil and welcoming atmosphere complete with personal attention and spa-like robes. If only there were a spa, it might be nearly perfect.

Various physical therapy approaches can reduce pelvic pain and help restore normal functions. According to physical therapist Esther Dolowich, "About 33 percent of all women suffer pelvic pain and/or urinary incontinence for a variety of

reasons throughout life."

In the future, the Center hopes to add other services such as cardiac assessments and dermatology to create a "one-stop-shop".

Says Dr. Lanner-Cusin, "Women will let us know what they need."

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[back to top](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA