

New teaching aid taking the awkwardness out of sex education

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Credit: Cliterate

A new, anatomically accurate, pull-apart model of the vulva is providing accessible education on a topic that's been taboo for too long.

Created in collaboration with RMIT University, [Cliterate](#) is an [educational tool](#) for health care professionals and educators that pulls

apart to show the relationship between the vulva, clitoris and pelvis.

Lead designer and RMIT Senior Lecturer Dr. Judith Glover said Cliterate addresses the lack of accessible and accurate educational resources available on the vulva.

"One of the issues with existing anatomical models is you get everything—nerves, muscles ligaments," said Glover, from RMIT's School of Design.

"But you can't pick and choose which aspect of the model to focus on that's relevant to a client. They also don't show the relationship between different parts of the genitals."

Cliterate founder and [occupational therapist](#), Anita Brown-Major, used puppets of the vulva to teach clients about their genitals before she created Cliterate.

"While my puppets have been really useful, they're not anatomically correct," said Brown-Major.

"But anatomically correct models currently available are not user friendly, and I needed something that was accurate but could also be touched, pulled apart and simplified."

Working closely with Brown-Major, Glover and RMIT Industrial Design graduates Charlie Richardson and Cara Jordan-Miller poured through decades of medical research and anatomical images to create computer aided designs of Cliterate, which was 3D printed then manufactured by Pete Hvala from X-Product.

"Having a tool that can be pulled apart is important from an accessibility perspective. If someone has an [intellectual disability](#), you need a model

that is simple but accurate," Glover said, who is also designing sex toys for people with disability with another research client.

"For too long these issues have been taboo and we need to treat devices for sexual practice and sex ed the same as designing for any other devices—built on good quality research and design methods."

Cliterate was born from a lack of resources to support body, sex and intimacy education within the disability population, said Brown-Major.

"Our brains are all wired differently so we need helpful resources that consider multiple learning needs, and these resources need to be accurate and based on the latest available research," she said.

Overcoming the 'awkward' in genital education

Glover and Brown-Major said information about the vulva and clitoris was surprisingly difficult to find without the assistance of pioneering urologist Dr. Helen O'Connell and her team from the University of Melbourne.

"The lack of education on the vulva has health implications for everyone," said Brown-Major.

"Not being able to identify the difference between the vulva and the vagina, for example, could mean applying topical creams to the wrong areas, which can make you really sick.

"Or inserting a catheter into the hood of the clitoris, instead of the urethra, could have huge consequences, not to mention be extremely painful."

Glover and Brown-Major want to take the stigma away from genital

education and hope Cliterate can create a space for comfortable conversations about our bodies.

"Our bodies and our genitals are a fact of life—none of it should have any taboos on it at all," said Glover.

Cliterate is available to pre-order now and will be ready to launch in late September 2023.

Provided by RMIT University

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