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Andrology

An-droh'-uh-jee

The study of the
functions and diseases
specific to males,
especially of the
reproductive organs

>> FROM THE DIRECTOR

Australia has an ageing population. As more people reach the age of 65 and over, certain health issues become more common such as coronary heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis and fracture.

However, little research in Australia has focused on the reproductive health of men as they age. To get an understanding of the reproductive health of middle-aged and older men, Andrology Australia recently completed a survey of almost 6000 men aged 40 years and older across all states and territories in Australia.

Findings from the study highlight the significant numbers of men affected by reproductive health problems, with many of these men not seeking help and appropriate treatment from their doctor.

This edition of *the Healthy Male* focuses on some of the outcomes from 'The Men in Australia Telephone Survey' (MATeS). It is hoped the survey will contribute to the development of appropriate treatment strategies, health policy and provision of services for middle-aged and older men.



Professor David de Kretser

A step towards improving men's health in Australia

Until now, specific data on reproductive health in men has not been available in Australia, and the estimates previously used were based on studies from the United States and Europe. To provide an accurate snapshot of reproductive health in middle-aged and older men in Australia, the 'Men in Australia Telephone Survey' (MATeS) was recently conducted by Andrology Australia.

MATeS is the largest Australian study to survey health issues specifically affecting Australian men, and is considered to be the first of its kind in the world because of its national outreach and perspective. The results from the study describe the self-reported prevalence of a range of reproductive health disorders and related health issues. The study also highlights the concerns and attitudes of men that affect health seeking behaviours.

Such information is imperative for the development of strategic men's health policy and planning that is necessary to meet men's needs at different stages of their lifetime. This study has also identified those areas where there is limited knowledge, and will provide the basis of more targeted health promotion initiatives to ensure that all Australian men have access to appropriate services and information.

In addition, this study also highlights the need for an Australian population-based longitudinal study in men's health, similar to the Women's Health Australia project¹. A men's health longitudinal study would provide valuable information to understand the effect of ageing on men's health and provide a resource for developing preventative health strategies for the older male population.

MATeS highlights many areas where challenges exist in the provision of service, information and education. It will provide a valuable resource to governments, clinical and academic communities and individuals and organisations dealing specifically with men's health issues both now and in the future. It is vital that such initiatives are recognised as national resources, thus allowing collaborative research opportunities within Australia and overseas to adopt a more unified approach to improve the reproductive health of the older male.

¹ The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health,
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/waha/>

International Men's Health Week 2005



Andrology Australia has provided brochures and posters to more than 160 organisations across Australia for events and displays for International Men's Health Week (13 – 19 June). More than 14,000 copies of the 'User's Guide: What every man needs to know' were requested, along with almost 800 posters.

To find out how many events were being held for the Week, Andrology Australia sent out a postcard reminder that resources were available. As such a wide range of organisations responded and placed a focus on International Men's Health Week (IMHW) this year, this shows that interest in men's health is growing in the community.

"Awareness of men's health has certainly increased in recent years, and with the positive response Andrology Australia received from around the country, we can only hope to further raise this awareness next year," said Professor David de Kretser, Director of Andrology Australia.

"It is vital for all organisations to work together to make a difference to men's health in Australia".

International Men's Health Week has been celebrated in Australia since 2003, and aims to raise the profile of men's health nationally, regionally and locally. This is the first year that Andrology Australia has actively raised the awareness of IMHW, and will be making resources available in a similar promotion again next year.

>> PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

8th International Congress of Andrology

Professor David de Kretser, Director of Andrology Australia, recently gave a plenary lecture on 'Global Issues in Male Reproductive Health' at the 8th International Congress of Andrology held in Seoul, Korea.

With an ageing population and the high prevalence of male reproductive health disorders, the plenary lecture emphasised that pressure will be increased on health systems around the world as more men seek help for reproductive health disorders.

In relation to men's reproductive health in Australia, David discussed the development of reference intervals that will assist when confirming the diagnosis of androgen deficiency in men. He highlighted some of the difficulties in diagnosing androgen deficiency and the inadequacies

of the ways in which testosterone levels in blood are measured. The results of an Australian study of the normal ranges for testosterone in young men, comparing the commonly used measurement system for testosterone, will assist in improved diagnostic criteria and indicates the need for improvement in these methods.

David also presented some of the data from the 'Men in Australia Telephone Survey' (MATeS) on the prevalence, attitudes and concerns of male reproductive health; which was very well received by the international audience.

The congress was held on 12-16 June 2005 and had the theme "Men's Health - Nature and Nurture" and was attended by over 400 participants.

Focus on Men in Australia Telephone Survey (MATEs)



Why survey Australian men about their reproductive health?

It is well known that the number of older people in the population is steadily increasing. As men age, reproductive health disorders also become more common and can impact on quality of life and relationships. Reproductive health problems may also be a sign of other more serious health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.

It is important to know the proportion of men in Australia who may be living with a reproductive health disorder, to make sure that men have access to appropriate treatments and services and that health policy reflects men's reproductive health needs at different stages of their lifetime.

What is MATEs?

The Men in Australia Telephone Survey (MATEs) was commissioned by Andrology Australia to collect information on self-reported prevalence rates, health behaviours, attitudes and concerns of middle-aged and older Australian men. The survey covered broad aspects of men's health and well-being, including reproductive health. A total of 5990 men aged 40 years and over from all States and Territories across Australia participated in a 20-minute telephone interview.

The oldest participant in the survey was 98 years of age and almost 400 men were aged 80 or over.

Why is MATEs different to other studies?

MATEs provides a unique 'snapshot' of the health of middle-aged and older Australian men. It is the first national study on men's health issues in Australia. The high response rate of 78% achieved in MATEs ensures that the results are truly representative of the ethnically-diverse population of Australia. As sampling was across Australia and not restricted to a particular geographical region, the findings can be applied to the whole population. A unique feature of MATEs is its broad focus on male reproductive health as a whole, which differs from most surveys that are restricted to single health problems such as erectile dysfunction.

Are Australian men healthy?

Almost 2 in 3 men aged over 40 years are overweight and obese, with about 1 in 5 men having a large waist circumference (>102cm).

On average, about one quarter of men over 40 years reports high blood pressure, increasing from 1 in 10 younger men (40-49 years) to about 1 in 2 men aged over 70 years. About 1 in 15 men (40 years and over) report needing treatment for diabetes, with about 1 in 8 men reporting feelings of depression that are severe enough to interfere with daily life.

Men aged 70 years and over reported a higher rate of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, using prescription medicines, having a larger waist circumference, being former smokers, abstaining from drinking alcohol and having a sedentary lifestyle compared to the youngest group of men (40-49 years). A greater proportion of men 70 years and older were also underweight.

These findings are consistent with other large national health studies².

How common are male reproductive health problems?

MATEs found that about 1 in 3 men aged 40 and over have one or more reproductive health problems (prostate disease, lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) and/or erectile dysfunction).

The older men are, the more likely they are to develop reproductive health problems. About 4 in every 5 men aged over 70 years report having a reproductive health problem compared to about 1 in 5 younger men (aged 40-49 years).

Is erectile dysfunction a disorder that only affects older men?

Erectile dysfunction can affect men at any age, however, with each decade of life the chance of having erectile problems increases. Erectile dysfunction affects about 1 in 30 men aged 40 to 49 years and increases to about 2 in 3 men over 70 years of age.

How common is prostate disease (including prostate cancer)?

Self-reported prostate disease affects about 1 in 7 men over 40 years of age. Again, more common in older men, about 1 in 3 men over 70 years are diagnosed with prostate disease.

The survey showed that prostate cancer affects approximately 1 in 30 men over 40 years of age. Prostate cancer is more common in older men, with around 1 in 11 men aged over 70 years diagnosed.

Almost 3 in 5 men aged over 40 years were concerned about prostate cancer. This was reflected by half of all men having had a blood test for Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) and/or a digital rectal examination (DRE) to check for a prostate problem.

Is it common to go to the toilet often?

Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) is a common term used to describe the range of urinary symptoms (such as frequency, hesitancy, urgency) that may be linked to an enlarged prostate gland (benign prostatic hyperplasia, BPH).

One in 6 men over 40 years suffer from significant LUTS and the prevalence of LUTS was higher in older age groups, with almost 1 in 3 men over 70 years reporting LUTS.

Having to get up two or more times in a night to urinate (nocturia) affects almost 1 in 5 men over 40 years.

Focus on Men in Australia Telephone Survey (MATEs)

What do men know about testosterone?

Men's knowledge of the role of testosterone was low with one in 4 men over 40 years never having heard of the word 'testosterone'. About half of men who were familiar with the term were not aware of testosterone's role in maintaining bone strength and body hair distribution, with most men attributing its role to maintaining sexual function and masculine behaviour.

Do reproductive health problems concern men?

While 4 in 5 younger men are concerned about losing their ability to achieve an erection, this concern is reduced in older men and men with poorer erectile function. In contrast, concern about prostate cancer was expressed by 1 in 2 men, which appears to prompt a significant number of men to seek medical testing.

Men's view of the importance of reproductive health disorders may lessen amongst the 'oldest' old with a significant number of men over 70 years becoming prepared to accept poorer reproductive health and reduced sexual activity as a consequence of ageing.

Even though men's knowledge of the term 'testosterone' was low, about 1 in 6 men were concerned about the media driven term 'male menopause'.

Indirectly, this study also challenges the long-held belief that Australian men are not concerned about their health.

With about 78% of men agreeing to participate in the study and 90% of those indicating they would welcome opportunities to participate in future research on men's health, the study demonstrates the interest older men have in their own health.

Who do men talk to about reproductive health problems?

Although 4 in 5 men in the study age range had visited a doctor in the past year, men seem unwilling to discuss reproductive health problems with their doctor. For example, only 1 in 3 men with significant erectile problems spoke to a doctor, even though safe and effective treatments are available. Older men were less likely to speak to a doctor about erectile problems. While numbers were small, Italian and Indigenous men also seem less likely to speak with a doctor about erectile problems.

In addition, a significant number of men consider themselves to be suffering symptoms of low levels of testosterone without seeking medical advice.

Differing health-seeking behaviours are partly caused by different levels of understanding and concern between the different health conditions, with some suggestion that ethnic background may also impact on such behaviours.

Where to next?

The MATEs data set is a unique resource that provides valuable information on the health and well-being of middle-aged and older Australian men. With the depth of questioning and the wealth of data collected from the survey, further analysis will be carried out to explore the association between reproductive health disorders and the complex patterns of interaction between lifestyle, biomedical and social factors.

Who was involved in MATEs?

This national telephone survey was supported and undertaken as part of the objectives of Andrology Australia. Andrology Australia recognises the financial support provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The study was undertaken in collaboration with Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research (Vic), the ANZAC Research Institute (NSW), The University of Sydney (NSW), Monash Institute of Medical Research, Monash University (Vic), La Trobe University (Vic) and The University of Adelaide (SA).

Particular thanks go to the Hunter Valley Research Foundation (NSW) for the administration of

the survey and to the 5990 men who gave their time and personal insight to make a significant contribution to our understanding of men's health in Australia.

Where can more information be found?

The preliminary findings from this study have recently been published in:

Holden CA, McLachlan RI, Pitts M, Cumming R, Wittert G, Agius P, Handelsman DJ and de Kretser DM. Men in Australia Telephone Survey (MATEs): A national survey of the reproductive health and concerns of middle-aged and older Australian men. *Lancet* 2005; 366: 218-24

A summary report can be downloaded from the Andrology Australia website at <http://www.andrologyaustralia.org/survey/mates.pdf> or for a hard copy contact Andrology Australia on ph: 1300 303 878 or email info@andrologyaustralia.org.

² Dalton M, Cameron AJ, Zimmet PZ, et al, for the AusDiab Steering Committee. Waist circumference, waist-hip ratio and body mass index and their correlation with cardiovascular disease risk factors in Australian adults. *J Intern Med* 2003; 254: 555-63



There is a major lack of Australian information relating to male reproductive health disorders in middle-aged and older men. Without information gained from properly designed studies, it is difficult to develop treatments, services and health policy to meet men's health needs.

In order to gather this information, a Project Steering Group has been established to develop a proposal for a longitudinal study of middle-aged and older men. The MATeS study (described in the Focus On section) provided the background information for determining the need and extent for such a longitudinal study.

Longitudinal study on men's health proposed

The aim of an Australian longitudinal study is to provide information on male sexual health, prostate health, bone health, reproductive hormones, quality of life and muscle strength and function in an ageing population.

The study will also look at the risk factors and behaviours that may contribute to health disorders, and the broader psychosocial issues of men's health.

Representative of all men in the Australian community, the study will be able to identify if any particular subset of the population is at a greater risk of health disorders. It will also be able to provide an opportunity to compare health issues related to men living in rural and metropolitan/urban areas and different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The study will be designed to follow middle-aged and older men over a period of 10 years. Men in the study will be a variety of ages, so that information about reproductive and sexual function in men greater than 70 years is included.

It is hoped that through the longitudinal study, an understanding of the effect of ageing on men's health will be gained. It is also hoped that the study will provide a valuable resource for developing preventative health strategies for the older male population.

>> RECENT EVENTS

Highlighting a major genetic cause of male infertility

'Members of the Klinefelter's Syndrome Working Group'

Top row (from L to R):
Dr Alexander Bennett (Qld)
Dr Ann Conway (NSW)
Mrs Margaret Ross (Vic)
Prof. David de Kretser (Vic)

Front row (from L to R):
Dr Peter Simm (Vic)
Dr Catherine Choong (WA)
Prof. Rob McLachlan (Vic)



Andrology Australia has recognised the need to raise professional and community awareness of Klinefelter's Syndrome to ensure that men are properly diagnosed and effectively treated. To identify the issues, develop proposals and implement a range of program activities, a working group has been established.

Klinefelter's Syndrome is one of the most common genetic disorders (47XXY), affecting approximately one in 650 men. It is the most common cause of male hypogonadism, a condition where the body does not produce enough sperm and testosterone for the body's needs. Males with this disorder may also have learning difficulties.

Many men with Klinefelter's Syndrome are never diagnosed, and so miss out on the benefits of androgen replacement and experience increased rates of other related conditions such as osteoporosis and diabetes. The lack of diagnosis is due to the great variation in clinical presentation and lack of professional and community awareness of Klinefelter's Syndrome.

On Wednesday 18 May 2005, the Klinefelter's Syndrome working group met for the first time and developed the terms of reference for the group. The group aims to identify the current areas where knowledge is lacking, and discuss opportunities to improve the detection of the Syndrome, possibly by newborn (neonatal) screening programs.

Programs will be established in the professional community to raise the awareness of the under-diagnosis of Klinefelter's Syndrome. The working group will also aim to raise the awareness of Klinefelter's Syndrome in the community through community education programs and the development of education material for men and their families.



Dr Carol Holden

Dr Carol Holden is currently Project Manager at Andrology Australia, coordinating the activities of the Centre and ensuring effective administrative and financial management. Carol played a key role in the coordination of MATeS.

After completing her Bachelor of Science (Honours) at King’s College, University of London, Carol moved to Australia in 1986 and gained her PhD in reproductive biology from Monash University in 1994. She has also completed further postgraduate qualifications in Business Administration (Swinburne) and Health Informatics (Monash).

Carol previously worked at Monash IVF as Manager of the Andrology Laboratory. She continued there for a number of years until leaving her position as Operations Manager of Monash Reproductive Pathology and Genetics in 2000 to take up the position of Project Manager at Andrology Australia.

Carol’s role, with Prof. David de Kretser, was instrumental in establishing the Centre as the primary resource for men’s reproductive health information in Australia.

In 2004, Carol was awarded the Monash Faculty of Medicine Dean’s Award for Excellence, which recognises contributions to the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, that exceed the normal requirements of the position.

Updating ‘Men’s Health Matters’ guides

Andrology Australia is currently undertaking a review of the current series of ‘Men’s Health Matters’ guides, to ensure material is up-to-date and relevant to the Australian reader. Questions asked over the Internet in the last 18 months are also being included.

The guides on Androgen Deficiency and Erectile Dysfunction have been reviewed, and the 2nd editions are available now. (ph:1300 303 878)

Newsletter survey results

Thank you to all those who sent in the survey that accompanied the last edition of *the Healthy Male*. Your responses are being analysed and your suggestions for the newsletter taken into account.

We hope that you continue to enjoy reading *the Healthy Male* and find it a useful resource on men’s reproductive health.

Androgens and the older male symposium

Andrology Australia is supporting a symposium on ‘Androgens and the older male’ at the forthcoming Asia Pacific Society of Sexual and Impotence Research meeting being held in Cairns (5 - 8 October, 2005).

To register for the Symposium go to www.promaco.com.au/conference/2005/apssir

6th National Men’s and Boys health conference – Melbourne

The 6th National Men’s Health conference will be held in Melbourne on 9th -12th October. The 4th National Indigenous Male Health convention will follow.

Details about the conference can be found at <http://www.regocentre.com/mhc/conferences.html>



Newsletter of Andrology Australia

Australian Centre of Excellence in Male Reproductive Health

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