



The Healthy Male

Issue 24 – Spring 2007

Andrology Australia is supported by a grant from The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

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Newsletter of Andrology Australia – Australian Centre of Excellence in Male Reproductive Health

Challenges in setting up a men's health policy

The World Health Organisation defines health as '...a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.' So what is men's health? Surprisingly there are many different definitions, none of which seem to encompass the complex nature of men's health.

Definitions of men's health to date have focused on either male specific conditions of the reproductive organs, or on comparisons between men's and women's health. Recent discussions have led to definitions focusing on men's health in relation to social and economic factors, and others relating to masculinity.

These various definitions of men's health can be considered either narrow or inadequate. This raises a dilemma – if the definitions of men's health are not well articulated and there is not one widely accepted definition that covers all aspects of men's health, then developing a men's health policy may be compromised.

James Smith, a PhD Candidate at the University of Adelaide and Lecturer at Flinders University recently discussed the need for a broader, more appropriate view of men's health on which a comprehensive national policy can

be based'. To develop this broader view, James suggests that men's own perceptions of their health need to be taken into account.

Men's own opinions of their health and health practices can contribute to understanding significant public health concerns. Listening to men's voices is also likely to persuade policy makers to address men's health needs, a topic raised during the recent 7th National Men's Health Conference.

In Australia, research into men's own perceptions of their health and health practices is scant. Although it would take a great amount of resources and time, it would be beneficial in articulating the way men define their health.

Health researchers, practitioners and policy makers need to adopt a consumer-focused public health approach. This will contribute to the development and implementation of a national men's health policy and thus improve men's health in Australia.

¹Smith, J. Addressing men's health policy concerns in Australia: what can be done? *Australia & New Zealand Health Policy*, 2007; 4(20), (doi: 10.1186/1743-8462-4-20)



From the Director

Following the endorsement of a national women's health policy in 1989, there has been much debate about the need for a national men's health policy in Australia.

A men's health policy will provide a framework by which to improve the health and quality of life of all men in Australia. A policy can also help coordinate state and national men's health programs.

One difficulty with developing a men's health policy in Australia is that there are a range of social, biomedical and political issues all requiring different approaches. Basing a policy only on one aspect of men's health will not encompass the complexity of the issues.

The UK and the Republic of Ireland have been pursuing different models in their approach to men's health policy, and

Australia can possibly learn from these models to develop and implement a national policy and recommendations.

One thing is clear: a men's health policy should be inclusive of all disciplines in men's health. A coordinated approach is needed between the community, health professionals, academics, men's health services and state and federal governments to develop a policy that will benefit the health of all Australian men.

Professor Rob McLachlan

Community education

Launch of Men's Health Education Kit

Andrology Australia recently launched a new men's health resource that provides community members with everything they need to run a successful men's health event.

Developed in response to an increasing number of requests for speakers, the Men's Health Education Kit is a comprehensive resource designed for any community member to use.

Dr Carol Holden, chief executive of Andrology Australia, said that more individuals and organisations are recognising a need to promote men's health in their local community or workplace.

"Many community members see a need for men's health events but have limited resources available – both financial and logistical," said Carol.

"The Men's Health Education Kit will provide support to those community members who are active in men's health and often find themselves running events over and above their day-to-day responsibilities.

"This kit will help ensure that people running men's health events anywhere in Australia are all giving the same important health messages about living a healthy lifestyle, mental and physical health, and seeing a GP for any health concerns."

The kit includes a manual on how to run an event, a template for a promotional poster and a flyer, a media release, follow-up article, evaluation form and a CD-ROM with information and interactive presentations including comprehensive speaker notes.

There are two interactive presentations to choose from – one for the younger male, and one for the older male (40 years and over). The focus of the presentation is on male reproductive health issues but because of strong associations with mental health issues, relationships and a healthy lifestyle, the modules also include information on these areas.

Andrology Australia developed the resource in collaboration with a number of agencies and would like to thank members of the working group for their valued input:

Dr Geoff Broomhall (GP)
Mr Peter Gebert (cbus, Industry Super)
Mr Jeremy Hearne (Mensline Australia)
Mr Peter Strange (Bendigo Community Health Services)
Mr Nick Tolhurst (beyondblue)

Thank you also to the number of men's health organisations who kindly assisted in the review of material used in the presentations.

The development of the kit was supported by the Rural Health Branch of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Only limited numbers of the Men's Health Education Kit are available in 2007, so order your free copy today. Contact Andrology Australia ph: 1300 303 878 or email info@andrologyaustralia.org



Recent events

Merv walks for Walktober

Andrology Australia's Ambassador Merv Hughes, together with players from Western Bulldogs football team, recently stepped out in support of Walktober (www.walktober.com.au).

Men are a focus of this year's Walktober - a series of events during the month of October that aim to encourage people to walk. Developed by Kinect Australia (formerly VicFit) in collaboration with VicHealth, Walktober also highlights the broader community and social benefits of walking.

Andrology Australia's 'Men in Australia Telephone Survey'¹ found almost 25 per cent of men over the age of 40 didn't take part in any physical activity in the previous 12 months. A lack of physical activity is linked to erectile dysfunction and testosterone deficiency, so it is important for men to get up and get moving on a regular basis.

Being inactive also puts men at risk of other serious health conditions. Heart disease, diabetes and depression are linked with living a sedentary lifestyle,



Western Bulldogs players Andrew McDougall, Stephen Tiller and Cameron Wight with Andrology Australia ambassador Merv Hughes go for a stroll together during Walktober.

as well as 10 per cent of all cancers². Physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of colon cancer, and there is evidence of physical activity also giving some protection against prostate and lung cancer.

Walking is a simple solution to better health and wellbeing and doing a little bit every day can do wonders for your health. So, don't just sit there, get up and get walking!

¹Holden 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

²Colditz G. Physical activity and cancer causality. Presented at the 'Eat & Run' conference, Sydney, NSW, June 2002.



Focus on: Mens Health Policy

Author: James Smith, University of Adelaide

Over recent years, interest in men's health has grown and health professionals, researchers, community groups and the media have become more active in this area. There are many concerns about men's health, often relating to the difference in health outcomes and life expectancy of men compared with women. Concern has been raised that health services and systems have been geared towards women, or at the very least have failed to accommodate men, which has limited opportunities to engage men in discussion about their health.

There are many aspects to men's health, not just bio-medical or social, that need to be considered when developing, implementing and monitoring policy. Despite increased interest in men's health, there has been little progress in determining an approach that will adequately address all the issues and improve men's health in the long term.

Does Australia have a national men's health policy?

Australia does not currently have a national men's health policy (despite the launch of a draft national policy in 1996). There have been numerous calls for the implementation of a national men's health policy. This was recently re-affirmed at the 7th National Men's Health Conference held in Adelaide from the 3rd-5th October 2007. The state of men's health and what actions need to be taken to improve it has led to firm belief that policy and practice should be put in place.

Do we need a men's health policy? Why is it important?

The development and implementation of state and national men's health policies has important implications for the advancement of men's health in Australia. These include:

- A mandate to respond to men's health concerns by providing adequate funds to support research and practice endeavours.
- An opportunity to recognise that men's health extends beyond physical concerns, including aspects that relate to the social and economic determinants of health.
- An opportunity to listen to men's voices and to better understand men's health practices when reorienting health service provision in Australia.
- An opportunity to scope out the depth and breadth of existing men's health work (relating to both research and practice) across Australia.
- An opportunity to identify, and respond to, current gaps in health service provision.
- An opportunity to develop personal skills among men, to facilitate their improved health and wellbeing.
- Better co-ordination of state and national men's health programs (thus preventing the duplication of resources and services).
- An opportunity to focus on the relationships and positive contribution men make to society (as fathers, partners, carers, educators, mentors, etc).
- Improved longevity and quality of life for men (and their families) residing in Australia

Has there been any discussion with government about developing a men's health policy?

Both state and federal governments have expressed a marginal interest in men's health over the past ten years. The first national men's health conference and subsequent conferences saw men's health advocates request for state and federal men's health policy responses. Initial interest at this time was shown by government and there have been draft men's health policy documents developed over recent years, but they have not been endorsed or implemented (with the exception of NSW).

Why isn't there a men's health policy in Australia?

Historically, a number of suggestions have been raised as to why there is not a men's health policy in Australia, including:

- There is no widely accepted definition of men's health
- The lack of a social men's health movement
- There are medically dominated, narrow or inappropriate definitions of men's health
- There is a lack of evidence on which to base policy
- The Australian political and policy climate
- Underlying cultural assumptions about men's health behaviours

Recent commentary at the 7th National Men's Health Conference re-affirmed that many of the barriers mentioned above remain problematic for advancing policy discussion in Australia. However, it was also recognised that men's health policy efforts elsewhere in the world have been able to overcome these hurdles. Australia can too!

Who has been involved in advocating for a national men's health policy?

A number of professional bodies have contributed to increasing discussion advocating a national men's health policy. Position statements have been produced by The Doctors Reform Society of Australia (2003), the Australian Medical Association (2005) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioner's (2006).

Dr Greg Malcher, a general practitioner based in Victoria, is the National Convenor of GPs4Men, a network of GPs who exchange information and ideas about men's health. This group has also been very active in engaging with various stakeholders to develop men's health policy. The Australian Men's Health Forum is also positioned to create further political pressure to mobilise the policy debate in Australia.

There has also been an increase in academic publications requesting the implementation of a national men's health policy. The Medical Journal of Australia recently published a special men's health edition (October 2006) in which a number of commentaries on men's health policy were included. The Australia & New Zealand Health Policy journal has also recently published a commentary relating to the importance of including lay perspectives in men's health policy discussion.



How has men's health policy work been approached in the Republic of Ireland?

Men's health policy work in the Republic of Ireland is very different to Australia and the UK as it has been driven by the government. A Government report looking at health policy identified the need for a specific focus on men as a target population group. This led to a men's health research project being commissioned specifically to develop an evidence base that could inform the development and implementation of a national men's health policy.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of men's health in the Republic of Ireland, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to produce a nationally focused men's health policy research effort. This research provided an opportunity to look at what it means to be a man, including an examination of how the social construction of masculinities can influence men's health practices. This moves policy discussion away from an approach which inherently blames men for their health behaviours, and focuses attention towards the social and economic factors which interact with men's health practices.

The report that eventuated from this research made the recommendation to develop a national men's health policy. A National Men's Health Steering Group was then appointed to oversee the development of the policy. After extensive national consultation, it appears the Policy and Action Plan will be approved by the government and published by the end of 2007.

How could men's health policy be advanced in Australia?

With the increasing momentum of a men's health movement in Australia, now is the time to engage in a men's health policy debate at state, national and international levels. This debate must lead to formulated policy responses that can be actioned in a timely manner, and include policy recommendations that are carefully implemented and closely monitored.

In order to do this well, a co-ordinated approach and a united vision are both required. Given the growing level of community and professional interest in men's health and the increasing number of men's health advocates (from a wide range of backgrounds), Australia now has the necessary critical mass to champion change in this area. Learning from overseas models is imperative to move a men's health policy forward. By joining forces in a coordinated manner, male citizens (and their families), researchers, practitioners, professional bodies and existing services, can put men's health onto the policy agenda!

Are there men's health policies in other countries?

At this point in time, there are no government-driven national men's health policies endorsed by a Minister of Health (or Public Health) anywhere in the world. However, the United Kingdom (UK) and the Republic of Ireland have both been very active in men's health policy work and are further advanced in this area than Australia. Their advocacy efforts have taken different approaches and have thus achieved different outcomes.

How has men's health policy work been approached in the UK?

The Men's Health Forum England & Wales (MHF) and the Men's Health Forum Scotland (MHFS) have been instrumental in advancing men's health policy work across the UK. Researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and politicians with an interest in men's health have formed a united front to improve the health of men in the UK. This approach does rely on those politicians and government departments with an interest in men's health to champion the cause.

The MHF has released a series of policy papers that have been used to inform and shape the UK men's health agenda. A gender-relations approach has been taken, which focuses on building an equitable health system for both men and women. This approach acknowledges that gender equality is best achieved by integrating women's and men's health concerns when developing health and other public policies. However, this has led to men's health policy work in England and Wales to be distanced from the development of a discrete men's health policy.

Orchidometer finally here!

The long-awaited orchidometers have finally arrived in the Andrology Australia office. To all those GPs and specialists who put in an order over the last 12 months, we apologise for the delay, but there were some unforeseen production problems that stalled the process. The orchidometers will be sent out over the coming weeks.

While this first batch of orchidometers was made available to GPs at no cost, in 2008 they will still be available to GPs but there will be a charge. The orchidometer will however, still be distributed for free to GPs who complete the young men's health Active Learning Module (ALM) available from the Andrology Australia website www.andrologyaustralia.org.

The fourth and final case study that completes the ALM is now available. This peer and specialist reviewed case study focuses on 'James' who presents with lower abdominal pain and dysuria.

Other case studies focus on the management of androgen deficiency, testicular cancer, male infertility, premature ejaculation and Klinefelter's syndrome. Completion of all four case studies is worth 30 category one RACGP points, and it also attracts ACRRM points.

The ALM is a key initiative for Andrology Australia and developed in conjunction with the Department of General Practice, Monash University and by ThinkGP.

The Young Men's Health ALM complements the Prostate Cancer Risk Management ALM, also available on the Andrology Australia website. There are three case studies available that discuss the latest evidence on testing for prostate cancer. All three case studies comprise an ALM worth 30 category 1 RACGP points. This ALM was developed by The Cancer Council Queensland, The Australian Prostate Cancer Collaboration, Andrology Australia and ThinkGP.



The Andrology Australia orchidometer - at last!

Research round-up

Klinefelter's syndrome – to screen or not to screen

Klinefelter's syndrome is a genetic condition that only affects males. Men with Klinefelter's syndrome are infertile, may have hormone imbalances, breast development, decreased facial and pubic hair, and may experience social, behavioural and learning difficulties.

It is estimated that one in 650 males have Klinefelter's syndrome, yet up to 70 per cent of males may never be diagnosed. In Australia, the number of males with Klinefelter's syndrome is estimated to be around 15,000, with 10,600 remaining undiagnosed even though they may benefit from medical, psychosocial and educational assistance. Early identification of Klinefelter's syndrome has been advocated for many years, but population-based genetic screening has never been explored.

Andrology Australia is supporting PhD scholar Amy Herlihy to research the advantages and disadvantages of population-based genetic screening for

Klinefelter's syndrome at different ages and stages of development. Part of this research will involve determining how the age of diagnosis affects biomedical and psychosocial outcomes, including quality of life, for males with Klinefelter's syndrome.

Initial results of a literature review have shown that there is information available on medical, educational and psychological interventions for Klinefelter's syndrome. However, evidence regarding the psychosocial relationship between the age of diagnosis, available interventions and patient outcomes is insufficient.

Amy's research proposal has been designed to fill the gaps in our knowledge and effectively inform decisions regarding genetic screening for Klinefelter's syndrome.

Using both quantitative and qualitative methods in her research, Amy will follow-up Australian men diagnosed with

Klinefelter's syndrome at different ages. Participants will be required to complete a questionnaire survey and interview. Amy is presenting initial outcomes from her research at the Australasian Pediatric Endocrine Group (APEG) scientific conference in Broome in October.

Amy's PhD scholarship is supported by Andrology Australia, the Department of Public Health Genetics at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Prince Henry's Institute and the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Monash University. Bayer Schering-Pharma is providing financial support for costs associated with the study.

Calendar 2008

All subscribers to the Healthy Male will receive a free desktop calendar for 2008! Calendars will be available in December, so remember to tell your family and friends to subscribe to ensure they receive their regular men's health update and the 2008 calendar. Only one calendar will be available per person, so subscribe before they all run out.

Andrology Australia in Europe!

Dr Michael Lowy, a general practitioner based in Sydney, recently attended the European Men's Forum in Vienna, Austria and gave a poster presentation on behalf of Andrology Australia.

Dr Lowy presented the Andrology Australia model at the meeting demonstrating its uniqueness in providing men's health education to both the community and health professionals, underpinned by a strong research base. Such a successful model has the potential to be replicated in other countries.



Australian Prostate Cancer Collaboration 9th annual scientific meeting

The APCC recently held a very successful meeting in Melbourne for their members. More than 70 delegates attended the meeting at which international speakers Prof. Norm Maitland (York Cancer Research Unit, UK), A/Prof David Latini (Scott Dept. of Urology, Texas) and local speaker A/Prof. Ian Davis (Ludwig Institute Oncology Unit, Melbourne) gave important updates on stem cell research, challenges with clinical trials and education for men with prostate cancer.

Creating a male friendly environment

Much is known about medical aspects of men's health disorders. However clinical developments and new treatments are ineffective if health systems fail to acknowledge the importance of men engaging with health professionals. Men need to be supported to participate in positive health practices and to access health services that operate in a male friendly manner.

Peter Strange, Australia's first men's health nurse practitioner, is an advocate for creating a positive environment for men and encouraging them to access health services. His recent article in the Australian Nursing Journal¹ describes the success of the Bendigo Community Health Services (BCHS) men's health program.

The development and implementation of the community health based men's health program by BCHS provides a valuable insight into the needs of men and supports gender specific priorities. The model utilises three key strategies to achieve better health outcomes for men - men's health promotion in the community, work place health promotion including health assessments, and the development of a male friendly Men's Health Clinic.

The growing number of male participants accessing services through the program provides evidence that many aspects of the model align with, and respond to the needs of the majority of men in this rural region. Response to the program shows that men are interested in their health and will engage in positive health practices if they are encouraged to do so, and, are in an environment which supports these positive health practices.

With the current heightened awareness about men's health throughout the nation there is an inherent need and demand for men's health workers. Men's health is an area of great need and now is a good time for nurses and other health workers to jump on board and create positive environments for men in their workplace.

¹Strange P, Creative a positive environment for men, Australian Nursing Journal, 2007; 15 (1), p.31

Newsletter of Andrology Australia

Australian Centre of Excellence in Male Reproductive Health
Editor: Cassy Bezeruk

Andrology Australia

C/O - Monash Institute of Medical Research

Postal Address:

Monash Medical Centre
246 Clayton Road,
Clayton Victoria 3168

Street Address:

27-31 Wright Street,
Clayton Victoria 3168

Telephone:

1300 303 878

Facsimile:

+ 61 3 9594 7111

Internet:

www.andrologyaustralia.org

Email:

info@andrologyaustralia.org

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Monash Institute of Medical Research



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