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The HEALTHY MALE

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

»» FROM THE DIRECTOR

Health professional education is a fundamental component of Andrology Australia's strategy to improve male reproductive health.

During its planning phase, Andrology Australia identified that health professionals required additional knowledge and skills to ensure best practice when treating men with a range of sexual and reproductive health issues. There is a perceived lack of expertise in male sexual health among doctors providing primary health care, with sexual dysfunction frequently going undetected and undertreated.^[1]

In consultation with GPs an appropriate and flexible education program has been developed. Consideration has been given to the needs of health professionals in rural communities, where specialist resources are limited.

With GPs acknowledged as representing the gatekeepers of the health care system in Australia, emphasis has been given in the first instance to professional education at this level. However there are plans to develop activities to suit other health professionals. Discussions have commenced regarding the possible adaptation of the *Train-the-Trainer* program for Aboriginal Health Workers working with males from indigenous communities. We also hope to provide resources relevant to specialists in the near future.

This edition of **The Healthy Male** digresses from our usual format and is dedicated to providing an update on Andrology Australia's health professional education program. We hope you find it a useful resource on the educational activities and material available for the medical community.


Professor David de Kretser

[1] Humphreys S, Nazareth I. GP's view on their management of sexual dysfunction. *Family Practice* 2001 18: 516-518

Health Professional Website LAUNCHED

Andrology Australia is pleased to announce the launch of a new website www.drandrologyaustralia.org specifically tailored for health professionals providing care to men with sexual and reproductive health issues.

Designed to complement the existing public site [www.andrologyaustralia.org], this additional online resource will provide the medical community with access to quality, evidence-based information to assist in the management of men presenting with sexual and reproductive health issues. This dynamic site will be regularly updated with new information as it becomes available. We recommend you add the new site to your favourites list.

"Ensuring the site's relevance to the health professional's day to day practice has been of major importance in developing this site," said Andrology Australia Director Professor David de Kretser. "We recognize the need for a user-friendly reference centre for the busy general practitioner."

Details of relevant journal articles, reviews and clinical guidelines where available will be included, together with a database of the existing national resources to support healthcare professionals with the care of men with sexual and reproductive health disorders. These include patient information in both print and video format and details of teaching materials. A searchable archive of case-studies is also being established.

As with the existing website the focus on this new site will be on key areas of male reproductive health including prostate disease, testicular cancer, androgen deficiency, androgen abuse, male infertility and erectile dysfunction.

Andrology Australia is committed to furthering the skills, knowledge, ability and confidence of GPs and other health professionals to treat and manage male sexual and reproductive disorders in their patients. Information on educational initiatives and training programs that meet these criteria will also be provided on this website.

Much of the information on the website will assume medical training or advanced understanding of health issues, however the site can be accessed by anyone interested. Patients may wish to use the material as a springboard for consultation with their own physician, recognising that the case studies only offer possible approaches suitable in certain situations.

Please email us [info@andrologyaustralia.org] with your comments and suggestions on the website. We are keen to receive feedback that will assist us produce a site that is user friendly and meets the needs of the busy health professional.

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Andrology

An-drol'-uh-jee

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



Distance Education Certificate Course

Monash University's Department of General Practice, with support from Andrology Australia, has developed a five week distance education certificate course for GPs with a special interest in male sexual and reproductive health.

The course objective is to increase general practitioners' knowledge of andrology and make them confident and comfortable in dealing with patients suffering from disorders of the male reproductive organs.

On completion of this unit, students will:

- > Appreciate the major issues in male reproductive health today
- > Understand the physiology of the male reproductive system
- > Demonstrate confidence in dealing with issues of male infertility and erectile dysfunction

- > Be familiar with recent advances in diagnosing and managing diseases of the prostate
- > Be familiar with the early diagnosis and management of testicular tumours
- > Develop skills in conducting a clinical audit, and gain an understanding of the potential of audits to improve clinical practice.

The course may be credited towards Monash's Graduate Diploma or Master's Degree in Family Medicine. It also offers a generous quantum of Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Clinical Audit (CA) points for vocationally registered GP's.

Since its inception in July 2002, approximately 15 GPs have successfully completed the course to date.

For more information on this course, please contact Julianne Tilbury on (03) 9579 3188 or email: julianne.tilbury@med.monash.edu.au

Rural Health Education Broadcast Has Major Impact



In conjunction with the Rural Health Education Foundation, Andrology Australia recently participated in what was described by participants as a high quality and extremely relevant satellite broadcast to GPs around Australia on Prostate Cancer, Androgen Deficiency and Erectile Dysfunction.

Three Andrology Australia Advisory Board Members, Professor David de Kretser, Associate Professor Mark Frydenberg and Associate Professor Doug Lording featured on the program which was chaired by Dr Norman Swan from the Health Report on ABC Radio National. Dr Greg Malcher, a general practitioner from Daylesford, Victoria and member of the Andrology Australia Service Provider Advisory Group also participated in the broadcast.

Ninety-seven percent of audience members surveyed indicated that the program would either significantly or to some degree influence the way they practice their skills.

"This outcome, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, is extremely good," said Mr John Anderson, past Chief Executive Officer, Rural Health Education Foundation. "The responses received from many viewers suggest a growing incidence of male reproductive diseases and members of the health profession wanting more information about them."

"We are very grateful to Andrology Australia for its support and participation in this program," said Mr Anderson.

Broadcast live via the Rural Health Satellite Network on Tuesday, 10 September and repeated on Friday 13 September, GPs and other

health professionals in rural and remote areas were able to access the program from 274 sites across Australia. It was also broadcast through the Health Channel, a subscriber-based service with approximately 400 viewers.

Several venues video taped the broadcast and have made copies available in resource libraries.

The program can also be viewed at the Foundation's website www.rhef.com.au by clicking the video-streaming icon.

It is anticipated that over 5,000 health professionals either viewed the live broadcast or will access it at a later date.

"Education for health professionals in rural Australia is a high priority for Andrology Australia," said Professor David de Kretser. "We are delighted with this level of recognition from the medical profession of the importance of men's health issues."

A second broadcast is scheduled for Friday 2nd May 2003. This will focus on male infertility and testicular cancer. For more information please contact the Foundation on 1800 646 015.



Focus on **TRAIN THE TRAINER**

What is the *Train the Trainer* program?

The *Train the Trainer* program is an Andrology Australia professional education initiative for general practitioners being conducted in conjunction with the Department of General Practice Monash University. The program is establishing GPs as educators for their colleagues in the field of male reproductive health.

What does this program seek to achieve?

The program seeks to raise the standard of care by general practitioners in the fields of male reproductive health. Its goal is to provide a wider skill base and resource pool so that approximately one in eight practices around the country has a GP who has attended a training program.

What are the specific aims of the program?

Flexibility is fundamental to the professional education strategy of Andrology Australia. The Centre seeks to meet the needs and interest of the general practitioner. Thus the *Train the Trainer* program aims to train GPs with a special interest in this field to be a GP Trainer with a more advanced level of knowledge and skills. Through the subsequent local educational sessions, basic knowledge and core skills in the detection and management of a range of common disorders in the area of male sexual and reproductive health will be provided to all interested general practitioners.

How does this program work?

Representative GPs from all states, including some rural areas, who have demonstrated an interest in male reproductive health and ideally with some previous training experience, were invited to participate in a full day training workshop to become a GP Trainer. Specialists and experts in specific areas of male reproductive health lead this “trainer workshop”. Presentations involve short talks from the experts and case based discussions. Direction is also given on how to run Divisional training sessions. Commitment is sought from the GP Trainer to facilitate two to three subsequent educational sessions within their own Division.

What factors influenced the structure of this program?

Literature in relation to education in general practice in recent years has shown that GPs consistently rated communication with peers, case conferences and small group discussions as the most useful method of learning. Program developers also recognize the need for courses to be contextually laden in the day to day clinical life experience. GP focus group feedback reinforced GPs’ desire for education from someone with a clear understanding of what GPs need to know rather than from Specialists.

What resource material accompanies this program?

A training manual including powerpoint slides are provided to GP Trainers for use in presentations at the local Divisional educational sessions. A video resource is also being developed.

Who was involved in curriculum development?

A Curriculum Development Working Group was established consisting of experts and specialists in aspects of male reproductive health. Educational developers and experts in GP education from the Monash University Department of General Practice were also involved.

To what extent is this meeting a specific need in healthcare education?

GP focus groups conducted by Andrology Australia and the Department of General Practice, Monash University at the end of 2001 indicated that there are very few specific education programs on men’s sexual and reproductive health. Men’s reproductive health has previously not been made a priority for Divisional education initiatives. The need for more training and knowledge is largely driven by patient demand and although this has not been great in the past it appears to be growing.

To what extent has the program been implemented to date?

A pilot *Train the Trainer* workshop was conducted in Victoria in May 2002 to train ten GP Trainers. Five subsequent Divisional educational sessions were held between August and October 2002 by the GP Trainers in their Division. The first national *Train the Trainer* workshop was held in Melbourne on Saturday 9 November with 31 GPs from around Australia trained as GP Trainers. Further Divisional educational sessions will be organized in 2003 by these GP Trainers within Divisions across Australia.

How are applications made to participate in this program?

To attend an educational session facilitated by a GP Trainer please contact your local Division. A list of upcoming Divisional sessions will be posted shortly on the new professional website www.drandrologyaustralia.org.

GPs interested in becoming a “Trainer” should contact Monash University Department of General Practice on (03) 9579 3188.

How are the sessions structured?

The sessions run for two hours on one night a week for two consecutive weeks.

What topics are covered in the program?

- Male Infertility
- Androgen Replacement
- Erectile Dysfunction
- Prostate Disease including Cancer

How many CME points are credited for this program?

GPs who complete an audit prior to and following the sessions can accrue a total of 55 CME points, which is nearly half the triennial requirements. Attendance at the sessions is worth two points per hour (ie 8 points for full attendance only).

Male Reproductive Health Education Program for GPs Rolls Out in Victoria



Ninety-two general practitioners across Divisions in Victoria have attended detailed educational sessions on male reproductive and sexual health as part of a pilot training program conducted by the Department of General Practice, Monash University, with support from Andrology Australia.

Nominated general practitioners who attended the first *Train-the-Trainer* workshop in Melbourne in May 2002 to be trained as GP Trainers, were given the task of facilitating educational sessions within their Division to assist with planning for a national program in this format.

Educational sessions on men's sexual and reproductive health were held across five Victorian Divisions of General Practice (four metropolitan and one rural) between August and October 2002. They ran for two hours a night, one night a week, for two consecutive weeks.

Two topics were covered each night. These included male infertility, androgen use and abuse, erectile dysfunction and prostate disease.

Teletutorials were held in the rural Division over four consecutive weeks.

"There is clearly a significant interest within the Divisions to attend sessions on men's health," said Professor Leon Piterman, Professor of General Practice and Head, School of Primary Health Care, Monash University.

"Overall the GPs attending rated the quality of these pilot sessions as excellent and at least 70% found that they met the session objectives," said Professor Piterman.

"We also gained some valuable feedback from both the attendees and facilitators which will assist with planning and promotion of future sessions around the country," he explained.

INTERNET UPDATE

Did you know that electronic copies of this newsletter can be emailed to you in PDF format? Rather than wait to receive a hard copy in the post you can opt to receive this directly to your computer desktop. This aids simple forwarding of the newsletter to members, associates and friends of your organisation.

To nominate electronic subscription, email us at info@andrologyaustralia.org

If you wish to continue to receive a hard copy of the newsletter, but also wish to access electronic copies for forwarding, just visit our website and download the PDF files of all past and present copies of *The Healthy Male*.

Andrology Teleconference Sheds Bright Light on Men's Health

The rural town of Bright, Victoria was the base for the first tele-tutorial series in the Andrology Australia's professional education program.

The four 90 minute sessions, run over four consecutive weeks, were another component of the Victorian pilot *Train-the-Trainer* program and were presented in conjunction with the North East Victorian Division of General Practice.

The teletutorial format (which essentially is a teleconference link up with added fax out material) enabled organisers to bring together busy rural doctors from far-flung areas in a "virtual sense". Participating doctors came from a range of towns in the region, including: Euroa, Benalla, Myrtleford, Mansfield, Mount Beauty, and Walwa and Bright and Mt Hotham.

"The response from the region's GPs was great," said Dr Pat Giddings, a Bright GP who co-ordinated the teleconference. "Demand for the program exceeded expectations with all places in the program being filled on the first day of it being publicised. For practical reasons we had to limit the size of the group to 12".

"There is a strong thirst for knowledge on these subjects and it was great for our local GPs to have access to the eminent specialists who presented, without having to travel great distances from the comfort of their own home and possibly accompanied by a glass of red!" explained Dr Giddings.

Albury Urologist Mr Henry Duncan spoke on prostate disease, Professor David de Kretser presented male infertility, Assoc Professor Rob McLachlan covered androgens and Assoc Professor Doug Lording discussed erectile dysfunction.

Andrology May Be Macho Answer to Gynaecology

By Jill Margo

Australian Financial Review, 19 September 2002

Just as women consult gynaecologists, so Australian men may soon be consulting andrologists.

In some parts of Europe, men already do and there is now a push towards establishing a similar medical speciality here.

Andrologists deal with all aspects of male reproductive health. They combine the skills of the urologist, the endocrinologist and the sexual-health physician, with a bit of oncology thrown in.

Having specialists who focus exclusively on male problems could enhance the reproductive health of Australian men. Instead of men being referred from one specialist to another, each time having to recount the history of their problem, they could have one specialist with whom they are familiar and who could be on their case long term, whether they are suffering from prostate, erectile or fertility problems.

If such a blended specialist proves too difficult to create here, Australia could have andrology centres, which would be one-stop shops, using appropriately trained general practitioners who could treat everything that goes wrong with the male sexual and reproductive organs.

David de Kretser is the director of Andrology Australia, a federal government initiative designed to do the pioneering work in this field. It aims to set some benchmarks and through research and education, enhance the reproductive health of men.

"In five years' time, I would like to hear men saying, 'Hey, I'm just going to see my andrologist'," says de Kretser, who is an endocrinologist and professor at the Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development in Melbourne.

"About one in 25 Australian men are sub-fertile and in about 40 per cent of cases, we can't tell them why their sperm count is so low," de Kretser says. "It's been estimated that 2,000 genes need to function properly to make a sperm, so there are 2,000 potential possibilities we don't even know about."

In the past four years, it has been shown that 10 to 15 per cent of infertile men are missing bits of genetic material on their Y chromosome. With sophisticated technology, their sperm can be injected into an egg to effect conception, but this means that if the baby is male, the genetic defect is transmitted.

Before such an embryo is implanted in the woman, the couple undergoes genetic counselling and is offered the option of going ahead only if it is female. Most decline, with the men often saying, "You're helping me now doctor. In 25 years, you'll help my son."

Sometimes, men inadvertently cause the fertility problem. De Kretser tells of a woman who went through two IVF cycles because her husband had a low sperm count. He had omitted to mention that he was taking steroids for body building. Steroids suppress sperm production and it can take a year for the system to recover fully.

While steroid abuse combined with exercise does build muscle mass and power, most men don't know what risks they are exposing themselves to. The regular dose of steroids used for testosterone replacement is 250 milligrams once a fortnight. Abusers are often taking a gram a week. "This shuts off their testicular function so that rather than being virile, fertile men, they become sterile studs," de Kretser says.

Testosterone replacement for ageing men is a highly controversial area of men's health. While it is accepted for men who have a genuine deficiency, the debate is whether healthy older men could benefit by being supplemented, just as older women benefit from hormone replacement therapy.

"Men reach their peak of testosterone production between 25 and 30 and basically, it's down hill all the way after that. The question is how steep is the slope and how rapid the decline," de Kretser says.

In men with genuine deficiencies, extra testosterone can work wonders by increasing their lean muscle mass and bone calcium, decreasing body fat and boosting their libido. In those with normal declines in testosterone, it has a much less marked effect but carries potential risks. Researchers are now questioning whether it fosters early hardening of the arteries and prostate disease.

>> RECENT EVENTS

Andrology Australia goes off shore



Earlier this year, 12 Fijian general practitioners enrolled in the Monash Male Reproductive Health distance education program. As a result Professor Leon Piterman and Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha visited Fiji to conduct a two day workshop with these dedicated health professionals, who described the session as "truly important, relevant and rewarding."

"The whole course when completed will be invaluable in our daily practice," said Dr Ram Raju who assisted with the co-ordination of the workshop from Fiji.

"The contents appear to be well set out covering a wide range of important subjects that will eventually make us better informed, more responsible and more knowledgeable in dealing with Men's Sexual Health problems," said Dr Raju.



Professor Leon Piterman

Professor Leon Piterman has played an integral part in establishing general practice as one of the most vital and dynamic specialties in Australian medicine.

He is Professor of General Practice Education at Monash University, Head of the School of Primary Health Care and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

Not only has Professor Piterman been a driving force in setting up the various facets of Andrology Australia's professional education program, he is responsible for establishing Australia's largest and most successful University based Diploma/Masters program for general practitioners.

In 1992, he won the Monash Dean of Medicine's Silver Jubilee Teaching Award for the most outstanding or innovative contribution to teaching. This was awarded for the development of a Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine by distance education.

Professor Piterman is dedicated to improving medical education in general practice, to curriculum and distance education development and evaluation and to general practice research. He also has special interests in psychological medicine and preventative care. He continues to conduct part time clinical sessions in private general practice.



As a special New Year gift from Andrology Australia to all its newsletter registrants, enclosed with each hard copy of the Summer 2003 edition of *The Healthy Male* is a unique Andrology Australia calendar.

The desktop monthly calendar features an array of creative photographic images with a strong men's health theme. These images have been specially commissioned by Andrology Australia and will feature in a number of our upcoming publications.

Clearly printed on each monthly card is the Andrology Australia website address. We hope this acts as a reminder of this reference point for quality information on matters relating to men's reproductive health.

For email registrants, please contact Andrology Australia if you wish to receive a free copy of the calendar.

>> CLARIFICATION

Prostate Study Report

In the previous edition of *The Healthy Male* an edited version of an article from *BMJ* appeared entitled "Watchful Waiting as Good as Surgery". This analysis reported that a recent study had found no significant difference in overall mortality rates between patients having radical prostatectomy and those watchfully waiting.

However it should also be noted that the study also concluded that surgery significantly reduced disease specific mortality.

For more details of the study please see *New England Journal of Medicine* Sept 12, 2002 Holmberg et al. 347(11): 78.



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

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