

MEDIA RELEASE

10 July 2007



Deakin University study finds no magic pill will solve all erectile problems

Medications are not quite a magic pill to improve the sex lives of men with erectile problems, a Deakin University study has found.

Hayley Matic conducted the study for her Doctor of Psychology (Health) with Deakin's School of Psychology under the supervision of Professor Marita McCabe. She found that while oral medications, known as PDE5 inhibitors, may restore a man's 'sexual function' they don't necessarily restore a man's 'sexual health'.

"As well as the obvious physiological aspects, men with erectile dysfunction (ED) suffer a range of problems such as significantly poorer self esteem, sense of masculinity, sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction," Dr Matic said.

"This study found that overall well being was not improved in the men who had used medical interventions for their ED."

Dr Matic's study explored the psychological and relationship impact of ED on the lives of Australian men and their partners. It also looked at men's help-seeking behaviour and experiences with oral medication as treatments for their ED. It involved 410 men with ED and 242 men without ED.

"ED affects up to 50 per cent of men at some point in their lives and is generally treated with the use of oral medications," Dr Matic said.

"The focus on the medical and biological elements of ED has led to a relative dismissal of the role of psychological and relationship aspects of men's sexual experiences. As a result many men stop using the medications and continue to suffer ED as well as the associated problems with their masculinity, self-esteem and quality of life.

"Hopefully the results of this study will open up current mainstream treatments for this sexual dysfunction to include greater awareness of the psychological and relationship factors inherent in a man's sexual health."

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Dr Matic suggests that improvements could come from:

- Ensuring GPs and specialists who assess and treat sexual dysfunction are educated in the potential broad ranging impact of ED on a man's life
- Ensuring that those prescribing ED medications are able to talk to their patients about their expectations for the use of the drugs
- Increased development of and referral to non-medical treatments for ED, either in conjunction with medication treatment or as a stand-alone
- Increased inclusion of a man's partner in the assessment and treatment for ED in both medical and other settings

“As medications are only potentially able to address the biological/physiological aspects of sexual arousal, there is a clear need to consider broader application of a biopsychosocial model of health to our understanding and treatment of ED,” Dr Matic said.

Ends

Dr Hayley Matic is available for interviews after 9am on Tuesday 10 July.

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