

Help seeking behaviour among men with erectile dysfunction in primary care setting

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Abstract

Background: To examine the self-reported erectile problem and help-seeking behaviour among men.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out among 1331 men aged 40 years and above who attended public primary care clinics in an urban district in Malaysia. Questions were asked regarding presence of erectile problem, help-seeking behaviour and treatment sought.

Results: The mean age was 54.7 (± 8.3), ranging from 40 to 79 years. Among the subjects, 69.5% ($n=925$) had erectile dysfunction (ED); however, only 54.8% reported having difficulty with erection. The subjects with severe ED had higher proportion of self-reported ED (90.8%) than moderate (75.7%) and mild ED (27.4%). More than two-third of the subjects (67.2%) have spoken to someone about their difficulty; of these, 54.1% spoke to their spouse or partner, 6.3% to friends and 5.3% to family members. Only 32.4% had initiated the discussion with their doctor, whereas only 10.5% reported that their doctor had raised the issue. Among the men who did not seek any help, reasons were: ED normal part of aging (37.9%), due to health condition (32.2%), ED was caused by medication (9.4%) and they were embarrassed (7.3%). Only 4.4% had sought treatment. More than one third participants (35%) had used Sildenafil while most had used other traditional medicines such as Tongkat Ali, massage and Chinese herbs.

Conclusions: Self-reported erectile problem among men is common. However, ED is not a health condition that patients would commonly discuss with their doctors despite the fact that they are already seeing doctors for various other medical reasons. © 2011 WPMH GmbH. Published by Elsevier Ireland Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

ED has been shown to be associated with many conditions such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, coronary heart disease, depression, smoking and hypercholesterolaemia [1]. Although it is not a life-threatening condition, it compromises the well-being and quality of life in men and their partners [2].

Primary care doctors are often the first health provider whom patient can discuss about erectile dysfunction. However, many patients will not initiate the discussion about erectile dysfunction with their health care provider [3]. Thus it is important that doctors are aware about erectile dysfunction problem among patients who come to the clinics for various health conditions.

The objectives of this study were to investigate the prevalence of ED among men attending primary care clinics in an urban district, to assess their attitude towards ED and help seeking behaviour, and to identify the barriers for seeking treatment.

Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in public primary care clinics in an urban district in Malaysia. The study population consisted of men age 40 years and above who attended the clinics for various medical reasons. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaire. Erectile dysfunction

was assessed using the abridged five-item version of the International Index of Erectile Function (IIEF-5). Data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 16.

Results

Response rate

A total of 1688 eligible patients aged 40 years and above were invited to participate in the study but 1435 agreed to participate, yielding a response rate of 85%. For the purpose of studying erectile dysfunction, the subjects who were not sexually active (86) and who did not answer to IIEF had answered it incompletely (18) were excluded resulting in 1331 subjects in the final data set with evaluable IIEF-5 score.

Demography

The mean age of the subjects was 54.7 (± 8.3 SD), ranging from 40 to 79 years old. Among different various ethnic groups, Malay was the most common among the subjects (53.9%) followed by Chinese (22.8%), Indian (21.9%) and others (17%). The participants were mostly currently married.

Among the subjects, 38.9% were pensioner or unemployed and 65.5% had secondary education. About half of them had household income ranging from RM 1000 to RM 2999.

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