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Media Statement

MEN WITH ERECTION PROBLEMS URGED TO RULE OUT DIABETES

Erection difficulties may be a taboo subject but a peak WA diabetes research funding group is urging men and doctors to re-think talking about the issue on the back of an international study revealing its importance as a powerful warning sign of diabetes.

Diabetes Research Western Australia said the research, which showed men with erectile dysfunction had more than double the odds of having undiagnosed diabetes, should act as a wake-up call to the general public and the medical community.

“Erectile problems are something many men don’t want to talk to their partners about and don’t even want to mention to their doctor but this research shows it’s critical that they do,” said Diabetes Research Western Australia executive director Sherl Westlund.

“Not only could it, importantly, help them find a way to treat their erectile dysfunction and the relationship complications it can create, but also could help them discover they have diabetes – a condition that can cause other dire health complications so needs to be picked up as early as possible.”

The research, done by The University of British Columbia’s Center for Health Services and Policy Research and published in the July/August 2015 edition of the *Annals of Family Medicine** looking at data from more than 4,500 US men who took part in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 2001 to 2004.

It found that for the average man aged 40 to 59 years, the predicted probability of having undiagnosed diabetes increased from 1 in 50 in the absence of erectile dysfunction to 1 in 10 in the presence of erectile dysfunction.

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Department of Endocrinology and Diabetes consultant physician Bronwyn Stuckey said erectile dysfunction – defined as the inability to achieve or maintain an erection firm enough for sexual activity – was a common complication for men with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, with more than half of men with diabetes developing it.

“Diabetes is a condition where people have higher than normal blood glucose levels and this can cause blood vessel and nerve damage all over the body, often starting with the tiny blood vessels in the penis,” Dr Stuckey said

“If a man goes and gets medical advice about his impotence, ruling out diabetes – or other health complications as a cause – should be part of the investigation and men need to know to bring this up with their doctor, if their doctor doesn’t raise it with them.”

For more details on the work of Diabetes Research WA head to www.diabetesresearchwa.com.au or call (08) 9224 1006.

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*<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26195677>

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