

MEDIA STATEMENT

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NEW LINK FOUND BETWEEN TESTOSTERONE AND FRAILITY

Perth study results indicate new link between low levels of testosterone and frailty in older men.

Published in the July edition of the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism, researchers from the Western Australian Centre for Health and Ageing have found a new piece of the frailty puzzle.

“This is an important finding because frailty is poorly understood. We don’t completely understand how people become frail, but our study suggests that testosterone might play a role in men”, said lead author, Zoë Hyde.

“Not everyone becomes frail as they age, so we’re hoping to find out why some people develop this condition.”

“Not only will this improve people’s quality of life as they age, but healthier populations require less medical treatment, reducing the demand on the health system.”

Frailty is a state when a person nears the limits of their health reserves, so that when they are confronted by an event they might ordinarily be able to handle, it instead leads to more serious illness or even death. Frailty can be thought of as the straw that broke the camel’s back.

While there is some debate amongst the scientific community over exactly what makes a person frail, there is no doubt about the large impact frailty has in older men, their family and those involved in care giving.

“There have been tremendous gains in life expectancy this century, but we want to make those extra years of life healthier,” says Hyde.

The researchers measured frailty by looking for impairments in at least three of five areas. These included: fatigue; difficulty climbing a flight of stairs; difficulty walking more than one block; having more than five major medical conditions, like diabetes, heart disease or arthritis; or an unintentional weight loss of more than five percent during the follow-up period.

The study is part of a large longitudinal study, the Health in Men Study, which has been following a group of randomly selected men since 1996. This study followed a subset of over 3,000 healthy men aged 70 years and over for up to seven years.

However, Hyde cautioned that it is too early to recommend testosterone therapy.

“We’ve found a link between low testosterone and frailty, but we need to be sure that there isn’t some other factor involved. Large-scale, clinical trials are needed first to see if testosterone can prevent or treat frailty, and to assess the benefits and risks of therapy.”

“The best thing men can currently do to reduce their risk of becoming frail is to adopt a healthy lifestyle - keeping their weight in a healthy range, eating a nutritious diet, keeping physically active, and not smoking.”

MEDIA REFERENCE:

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