

Testosterone fight highlights need for strong research

14 April 2015, by Kate Bourne

Tough new Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) guidelines for prescribing testosterone have stimulated strong debate within the health industry, demonstrating the critical need for research into the long-term effects of hormone supplements, according to a University of Adelaide men's health expert.

Introduced this month, the new PBS criteria requires GPs (who could previously prescribe [testosterone](#)) to now consult with a specialist before writing a prescription for the hormone, and men now need to have lower levels of testosterone naturally before they are permitted to take a supplement, with the threshold level dropping from 8nmol/L to 6nmol/L.

Professor Gary Wittert, Head of Medicine at the University of Adelaide, says in the absence of research into the long-term impact of testosterone, [health](#) practitioners remain in the dark about the potential benefits or side effects of prescribing testosterone.

"Some are in favour of the new measures, believing testosterone is being unnecessarily over prescribed. While many endocrinologists feel the new regulations have been implemented without adequate consultation, are too restrictive, and will result in an unreasonable burden of having to "approve" GP prescriptions," Professor Wittert says.

"What is generally agreed, however, is that there is an urgent need for more research, something that is now being called for worldwide.

"Wide scale non-evidence based prescribing has resulted in restrictive regulations," he says.

Professor Wittert is leading Australia's largest, and the world's first, study into the potential benefits of treating overweight and pre-diabetic men with testosterone.

"Fortunately, research is underway in Australia. Our T4DM (Testosterone 4 the prevention of Diabetes Mellitus) study will provide essential information about testosterone and its link to one of the biggest chronic health conditions plaguing our country, type 2 diabetes," Professor Wittert says.

"If testosterone can help aid weight-loss and prevent type 2 diabetes, it will make a considerable impact on our health system," he says.

More information: More participants are needed for the T4DM study. Men 50-74 who are overweight and looking to improve their health, while being part of important research, are encouraged to take part. Visit the T4DM study website: www.t4dm.org.au or call 1300 865 436. This study is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Provided by University of Adelaide

APA citation: Testosterone fight highlights need for strong research (2015, April 14) retrieved 13 July 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-04-testosterone-highlights-strong.html>

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