

Communicate with patients and physicians about low testosterone

WASHINGTON — Recent guidelines from The Endocrine Society recommend screening men with type 2 diabetes for hypogonadism. Diabetes educators can help open communication about this common but rarely discussed condition, Donna Rice, MBA, BSN, CDE, said yesterday at the American Association of Diabetes Educators 35th Annual Meeting.

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Published data suggest a 33% to 50% prevalence of hypogonadism in men with diabetes. However, many diabetes educators are not aware of this close association, she said during a presentation on men's health.

"It is underreported, under-recognized and men are suffering in silence," said Rice, Wellness Program Manager and Consultant at Botsford Center for Lifestyle Management in Novi, Mich. "Opening up conversation about low testosterone is difficult. Most men will not openly discuss sexual problems."

Fifteen percent of family physicians routinely inquire about erectile dysfunction in patients aged 40 years and older, according to published data. But diabetes educators can provide the needed communication and education for these patients, according to Rice, an Endocrine Today editorial board member.

Educators are instrumental in facilitating communication between patients and providers, and can serve as that nexus for quality care, according to Rice. They can help by initiating the conversation, establishing screening tools and protocols and conducting a comprehensive medical history to identify men at risk. Rice urged diabetes educators at the meeting to be aware of this condition and to be proactive in communication with both patients and providers. – by Katie Kalvaitis

For more information:

* Campbell RK, Fine S, Jack L and Rice D. Men's health: the relationship between disease, diabetes and low testosterone. CS09. Presented at: AADE 35th Annual Meeting; Aug. 6-9, 2008; Washington, D.C.

PERSPECTIVE

Men do not want to face the fact that things may not be as good as they once were. We have an acute health care system and treat patients with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and hyperlipidemia, and half of them have low testosterone. Ninety percent of these patients are cared for in family medicine offices. The number of minutes they can afford to spend with patients is seven to 10. The acute health care system does not really allow much time to discuss low testosterone, so the patients who are fortunate enough to see a diabetes educator are really in great shape. Once you break the ice (about discussing low testosterone) it comes up pretty well.

– R. Keith Campbell, RPh, CDE, MBA, FASHP

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