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Infertility, impotence and prostate problems – just some of the difficulties faced by men

# Men's health

by Jonathan Hardy

It is interesting to consider the following facts:

- Men, on average, live for six years less than women.
- Over 90 per cent of convicted acts of violence are carried out by men, and nearly 70 per cent of the victims will be men.
- At school, around 90 per cent of children with behaviour problems are boys, and over 80 per cent of children with learning problems are also boys.
- Men comprise over 90 per cent of the prison population.
- Approximately three-quarters of the unemployed are men.
- A leading cause of death amongst men between 12 and 60 years of age is self-inflicted death.
- Men and boys commit suicide four times more frequently than women.
- Monday is the most common day for a man to commit suicide and 9.00am on a Monday morning is the most common time of death for men other than through a suicide.

D. H. Lawrence's poem *Healing* gives an insight into why these facts are relevant:

*I am not a mechanism, an assembly  
of various sections.  
And it is not because the mechanism is  
working wrongly, that I am ill.  
I am ill because of wounds to the soul,  
to the deep emotional self...*

### Fathers and sons

A 38 year-old man came to see me several years ago. His chief complaint was moodiness. His bad temper was not only making him unhappy, but also his wife and children. In fact, as is often the case with homeopathic referrals, his wife was the chief motivator behind him seeking treatment with me. His was quite a familiar story.

"I was brought up in a very Victorian home, with a Forces background. It was very strict and disciplinarian and that's the way I tend to be with my children, and it creates so much friction with my wife. I can't communicate with my children – I see my eldest son, who is 12, as a threat to the way I want to run the house. My wife's always telling me off for frowning – I focus so intensely I find it very difficult to relax."

This man also had epilepsy with occasional fits which would always begin with cramping in the right hand which would progress to a tonic-clonic convulsion. This led me to the homeopathic remedy *Cuprum*, which fitted his personality very well. *Cuprum* individuals tend to be serious and intense. *Cuprum* is a major remedy for cramps and convulsions, but *Cuprum* people tend to be cramped emotionally as well. They are both self-critical and critical of others. Someone needing *Cuprum* has a feeling of being attacked and having to defend oneself and of beginning to lose his strength and control. As a result, there is a great need to maintain order through rules and regulations. The remedy solved many problems, both physically and emotionally, for him and family life became much better. He said to me: "I've started to bond with my children and not see them as a threat!"

Being a real father is essential for personal happiness, the wellbeing of one's children and the health of the wider society. Many behavioural problems in children, delinquency in youths and criminality in adults come from the lack of proper fathering of our children. In his book *At My Father's Wedding* John Lee describes four kinds of defective father. There is the father who would be "king" who is aloof and does little more than administer punishments and pardons. There is the critical father who is full of put-downs

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and nit-picking. There is the passive father, who gives up all responsibility and power to his wife and provides no role model of the masculine attributes for his children and there is the absent father, who may be a capable, even powerful man, but is never there.

Psychologists have identified "under-fathered" boys. They fall into two distinct types. One is over-macho: aggressive in dress, pastimes and attitude. The other is under-confident and often depressed – frequently suffering from bullying and fearful to try new things. A good father needs to be present to do things with his son. He needs to be a firm but safe disciplinarian. He needs to be involved with sons – and daughters as well – to admire them, teach them self-sufficiency and give them positive affirmation of their value and worth.

## Infertility

For some men, of course, the problem is *not being* a father – infertility. A couple came to see me some years ago very

distressed. They had been told that they would never be able to have a family because the husband had no viable sperm. Repeated tests had shown no live sperm in his seminal fluid. The couple were desperate to have children and came to me on the urging of the wife's mother who is a great champion of homeopathy. When I am treating infertile couples I like to carry out hair mineral analyses to check for trace mineral deficiencies and excessive levels of toxic metals. These can cause low sperm counts, foetal abnormalities, miscarriage and other causes of infertility. With nutritional regimes and carefully prescribed vitamin and mineral supplementation these imbalances can be corrected. I also take the case homeopathically of both man and woman in order to select an appropriate homeopathic remedy. The correct medicine will improve general vitality but in addition certain remedies have very specific affinities for the reproductive organs and can sometimes restore normal function to a malfunctioning or

diseased sexual organ.

To return to the story of this couple – the woman's case was unremarkable homeopathically but the man's case sticks in my mind. He was fair-haired, very quiet and mild-mannered and somewhat shy. He was very sensitive to a number of things: criticism, warm, stuffy rooms and fatty foods (which gave him diarrhoea).

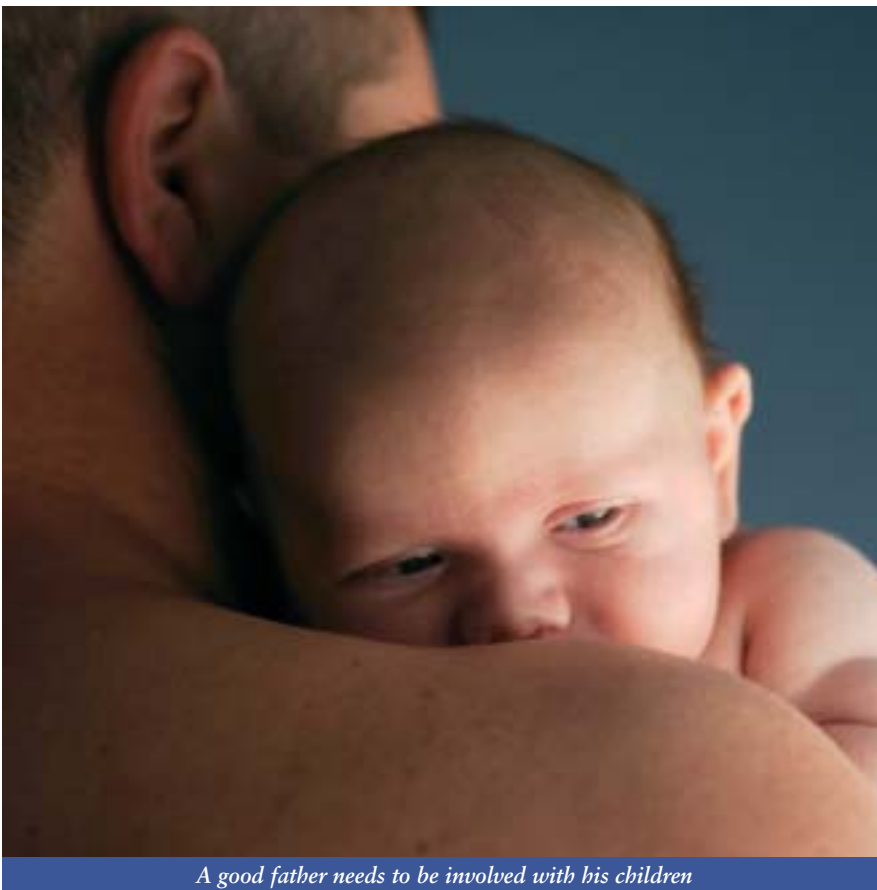
A theme of sensitivity makes one think of a plant remedy since sensitivity can be seen as the central issue in most plant cases. The timidity and sensitivity to fats and warmth led me to Pulsatilla on a constitutional level but I was especially excited about this prescription for him since Pulsatilla is known to have a special affinity with the testes – for example it is listed as a remedy for pain, inflammation, induration, swelling and even cancer of the testes. A remedy is much more likely to be effective when it has both an affinity with the target organ and the general state of the patient and I was therefore cautiously optimistic that homeopathy could indeed work a "miracle" for my patients. The telephone call came a few months later – "We're pregnant!" and sure enough a beautiful, healthy baby girl was born to a very happy couple and grandmother.

Other remedies which have a marked affinity with the testes include Clematis – another member of the Ranunculaceae (buttercup) family along with Pulsatilla; Aurum (gold) and Mercury (both members of the gold series in the Periodic Table of elements which is known as a group to have an affinity with the reproductive organs in both men and women); Rhododendron and Agnus castus.

Aurum is known for atrophy, inflammation and swelling of the testes and for undescended testes in boys. Mercury is indicated especially in cases of orchitis (inflammation of the testes) following after mumps (inflammation of the parotid salivary glands). Pulsatilla is also commonly needed for this unpopular condition.

Rhododendron is another remedy for atrophy, induration (hardening) and inflammation of the testes. It has a special affinity for the right testis and is also indicated in delayed puberty in

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*A good father needs to be involved with his children*



*Lycopodium is indicated for someone who lacks confidence even when the ability is there*

boys. In a case of *Rhododendron* one can expect to find the keynote symptom of the remedy – sensitivity to thunderstorms: these patients are frightened of thunder but can also sense its approach through the worsening of their symptoms before the storm-symptoms such as diarrhoea, headache, toothache and rheumatic pain.

*Agnus castus* is an interesting remedy. One of its common names is chaste tree and it has been considered since ancient times a herbal treatment to encourage chastity. Even now in Italy the blossoming branches of the tree are laid in the path of novices as they enter a convent to become nuns. Hahnemann's homeopathic proving of *Agnus castus* confirmed the folklore reputation of the plant with symptoms such as decreased or absent sexual desire, impotence and coldness and shrivelling of the penis. I have had several patients who have complained of this symptom picture and they have had cause to be very grateful to the chaste tree!

For those not familiar with homeopathic principles the apparent paradox here is explained by the central tenet of homeopathy: *similia similibus curentur* – like treats like. Those symptoms which a substance will produce when taken in material doses will be removed from a diseased person suffering with the same symptoms when the substance is given in the form of a homeopathic remedy that is diluted and succussed to produce a dynamic medicine.

### Impotence

A man of 56 came to see me. "I'm worried I'm going to have another

breakdown (this had happened some years previously). I'm just feeling so stressed again. I wake up in the morning feeling so anxious. If there's something I don't want to face at work I find ways to avoid it. A while ago I just broke down in floods of tears and I had to have some time off. Now if someone comes to the door or the phone goes I make myself scarce. I've been having panic attacks. I'm having problems with impotence."

He was indeed worryingly close to a breakdown. In addition he had significant problems with indigestion and flatulence. He had joint pains and was not sleeping well. It is so common that, when we get ill, we are affected on all levels of our being: physically, emotionally and mentally. I felt that *Lycopodium* would be a good medicine for him. *Lycopodium* is a remedy strongly indicated in people who lack confidence even though the ability is there. They have the tendency to run away from problems. Nearly always an individual needing *Lycopodium* will have some kind of digestive upset. A few doses of *Lycopodium* worked miraculously for him. Not only did he feel much happier and able to take problems easily in his stride, but all his physical complaints cleared up.

### Sexual health

Homeopathy is appropriate for all aspects of men's sexual health, including sexually transmitted diseases. Of course it is important that patients have the necessary conventional investigations and treatments but it has been well known to homeopathic physicians for

generations that conventional treatment of any infection does not necessarily remove the whole disease but only the superficial symptoms. The underlying disease process can remain and even be exacerbated by the suppression of the superficial manifestations of the disease such as discharge or ulceration. Indeed there are a number of homeopathic remedies which are specifically indicated in cases where a symptom complex has developed subsequent to the superficial treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. They can have dramatically beneficial effects in cases of serious chronic disease.

### Prostate problems

Problems with the prostate gland are very common. The prostate gland surrounds the neck of the bladder and the urethra. It is partly muscular and partly glandular and about 2 x 4 x 3cm in size. A number of pathological processes can affect this gland which secretes a fluid that forms part of the seminal fluid.

Inflammation of the prostate may occur often as the result of gonorrhoeal urethritis. This is accompanied by discomfort and pain in the perineal area and, if severe, with mild malaise and chills. A number of homeopathic remedies can treat this, both in the acute and chronic phases. Notable amongst them are *Apis*, *Pulsatilla*, *Thuja* and *Chimaphila* – this less well-known remedy is characterised by the sensation of swelling in the perineum as if sitting on a ball.

Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH) is a non-malignant enlargement of the

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prostate due to excessive growth of prostatic tissue. It is the most common benign neoplasm of the ageing human male and is present in 50 per cent of men by the age of 60. By age 85 about 95 per cent of men will have microscopic evidence of BPH. Symptoms include nocturia (frequent urination during the night), a sudden desire to urinate that is difficult to delay (urgency), difficulty in initiating urination, urination that starts and stops, diminished force of urinary stream, and a feeling that the bladder is not completely emptied after urination. The hypertrophy may eventually be sufficient to prevent passage of urine from the bladder, causing acute urinary retention.

My first post as a doctor was as a junior house surgeon on a urological ward. Most nights we would have elderly men admitted as emergencies with acute retention. They would appear as if nine months pregnant with hugely distended bladders and in extreme discomfort. My job was to insert a

catheter to relieve them and they were always extremely grateful! After an episode like this, it would be usual for the patient to have the excess tissue surgically removed, most commonly by a procedure called transurethral resection of the prostate. Recent advances in surgical technique which spare the nerves mean that the previously common side-effects of impotence and urinary incontinence are much less frequent. If symptoms are less severe medicines can be used which reduce the size of the prostate.

It is necessary to differentiate Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy from prostate cancer which is a malignant neoplasm, usually adenocarcinoma. It is the most frequent cause of cancer in men and the second leading cause of death in men. There may be no early clinical signs or symptoms of cancer of the prostate and therefore early detection is difficult symptomatically. There are tests, however, which include blood analysis of prostate specific antigen (PSA), periodic

digital rectal examination (DRE) and use of transurethral ultrasound (TRUS) to provide information about the size and shape of the prostate. If tests are positive and the cancer cells are believed to be confined to the prostate, several options are available: radiation therapy, radical prostatectomy and watchful waiting. Men with prostate cancer that has spread beyond the prostate are treated with hormone therapy.

Homeopathic medicines exist which can complement the conventional treatment of cancer of the prostate. These include Conium, Thuja, Sabal serrulata and Hydrangea. Homeopathy can effectively reduce levels of prostate specific antigen (a situation for which there is no conventional treatment). If the PSA is marginally high Thuja can be used and if it is very high Conium is more appropriate.

Conium is hemlock, a plant of the Umbelliferae family. It is a major homeopathic remedy for cancers of a number of types, including cancer of the prostate, breast, bones, ovaries and uterus. The disease is often associated with a gradual paralysis and weakness in the individual on all levels, mentally, emotionally and physically.

Thuja is the remedy prepared from the arbor vitae tree, a member of the conifer family. It has a strong affinity with the genito-urinary organs and is known as a medicine for tumours, both benign and malignant. There is normally some rigidity and obsessiveness in the Thuja personality and a feeling of fragility. The patient may be quite closed but well-mannered and polite.

Sabal serrulata is prepared from the herb saw palmetto which is also prescribed as a herbal medicine for prostatic hypertrophy.

Hydrangea has a strong affinity with the urinary organs and an influence on fluid balance, which is interesting since gardeners will know that Hydrangea is an extremely thirsty plant. It has been used for both benign and malignant enlargement of the prostate.

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*Being a real father is essential for personal happiness and the health of society*

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