

2005 Public Health Awards for Excellence and Innovation:

Public Health Research Award for Innovation

The Men in Australia Telephone Survey – MATeS

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The Men in Australia Telephone Survey (MATeS) is the largest Australian study to survey men's health issues. This unique and innovative public health research program explored the reproductive health of 5,990 middle-aged and older Australian men (40+) using computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) methodology. The study provides, for the first time, prevalence rates of male reproductive disorders in Australia, which until now have been based on estimates from international studies.

The depth of questioning during the 20-minute phone calls allowed broad aspects of men's health and wellbeing to be explored. The information gathered significantly improves our understanding of the attitudes, concerns and health behaviours of middle-aged and older Australian males.

Overall, 34 per cent of men (40+ years) reported one or more reproductive health disorders, all being more common amongst older men. Age-standardised prevalence of significant lower urinary tract symptoms (16 per cent), erectile dysfunction (21 per cent) and diagnosed prostate disease (14 per cent) were evident. Respondents expressed a moderate or high level of concern in regard to prostate cancer and loss of erectile function, although concern was less in the oldest age group (70+ years). While 88 per cent of men had visited a GP in the previous 12 months, differences in reproductive health behaviours were apparent: 50 per cent of all men (40+ years) had undertaken prostate cancer testing, while only 30 per cent of men with erectile dysfunction sought medical help.

The failure of men to seek assessment of their erectile dysfunction is of concern because this can be the first manifestation of diabetes or cardiovascular disease. This low level of enquiry and treatment for reproductive health disorders suggests that making better use of doctor's visits and other opportunistic strategies may be an effective way to educate men about their health.

The prevalence of reproductive health disorders and associated concerns highlights the need to develop services and education strategies targeted at improving reproductive health in middle-aged and older Australian males.

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