

Male "Menopause," Aging, and Sexual Function: A Review

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In recent years, attention has been given to clarifying and understanding whether a phenomenon occurs among men similar to the biological and psychological aspects of menopause in women. This article reviews the primary literature, summarizes basic physiological and psychological features of aging for men, and discusses the implications for sexuality and sexual function. We conclude that while there is no definitive evidence that a male menopause exists, important changes occur for many men which require adjustment, adaptation, and personal growth.

KEY WORDS: male menopause; aging and male sexuality.

Considerable attention and research has focused upon understanding the biological and psychological aspects of menopause in women. In recent years, attention has also been given to clarifying whether a similar biological phenomenon occurs among men. While among women menopause signals sharp decline in estradiol, androstenedione and testosterone, and rise in follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH), it is not clear whether such a distinct physiological and psychological event occurs in men.

McKinlay, Longcope, and Gray (1), reporting on the Massachusetts Male Aging Study (MMAS), noted the paucity of empirical research examining male menopause, and estimated the ratio of published medical studies of older women compared to older men to be "probably on the order of 100:1." This article presents a summary of some of the empirical research that may serve as a background for offering perspective on the physiological and psychological changes which occur in men, summarizes effects of such changes upon male

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