

Men's Health Issues in Clinical Practice: Andropause

Using Homeopathy as Part of a Complementary Medical Approach

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The concept of andropause, also known as male menopause, although recognized 50 years ago, is just beginning to gain acceptance. In this article I will explain the symptoms of andropause, how to recognize it in patients, and the treatments I have found to be useful in clinical medical practice.

Some of the other health issues facing men today can present in the overall andropause symptomatology. Most male patients are concerned about their circulation and the health of their cardiovascular system. Complaints of Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH) are common and need to be evaluated and treated.

The andropause complex of symptoms commonly will include fatigue, reduced muscle strength and endurance, loss of libido, some sexual dysfunction, coupled with depression and mental-emotional malaise. There can also be unexplained weight gain, fearfulness, panic attacks, and insomnia. Sometimes patients are concerned that their short term memory is noticeably diminished. These are the most common symptoms but of course they are not all present in every case. If these symptoms are noted in a man who is in his 40's or beyond, andropause should be considered.

In women, the symptoms of menopause can occur suddenly. In men, however, the hormonal changes are more gradual and less easy to define. Men may not want to recognize and admit these developing symptoms. Sometimes the andropause patient is propelled into action via his partner. Other times, during the initial medical evaluation, the physician's questions relating to overall health and energy level can elicit a list of andropause symptoms.

Most men begin to recognize and finally address these changes when they are in their mid 50's. These changes can begin, however, in the early 40's but some men don't actually begin to notice these changes until well into their 60's. Genes, stress, regular exercise, and diet are contributing factors.

Various blood tests and urine tests can be done which measure the specific levels of the hormones involved which are testosterone, free testosterone, and DHEA. Also, test for prolactin, FSH, and LH to evaluate pituitary function. This helps to differentiate primary pituitary weakness from primary testicular weakness (hypogonadotropic hypogonadism vs hypergonadotropic hypogonadism). It is also worthwhile to check the prostate gland (PSA) and level of growth hormone (Somatomedin-C). Thyroid hormone testing is also useful as this plays a role in the overall functioning of the endocrine system.

Correcting hormone deficiencies should be done with proper examination, testing, and discussion with the patient, before starting an andropause treatment plan.

The first key in the andropause treatment plan is to balance and correct the hormone deficiencies. This can be accomplished with specific homeopathic remedies along with other elements of a complementary medical approach. The key is to look at the levels of testosterone and the other 17 ketosteroids including DHEA. If these test levels are generally below an 'optimal' range, patients benefit clinically by having these hormones corrected. The concept of an 'optimal' normal range relates to normal range levels of a healthy man of approximately 35-40 years of age. For example, if a

man of 65 comes in with androgens at the low end of the normal range, these are lower than the 'optimal' range of normal for someone who is approximately 35-40. I have found that the 24 hour urine testing for these hormones has been particularly reliable in determining the correct levels.

The DHEA and testosterone hormone deficiencies can be corrected with prescriptions of the actual hormones. These prescriptions are available as a transdermal patch and as transdermal gels from compounding pharmacies.

Some patients who present with andropause may also have hypometabolic symptoms consistent with subclinical hypothyroidism. In addition to other symptoms (fatigue, weight gain), these patients complain of being cold and needing to wear socks at night as well as more clothing during the day. They sometimes complain of dry skin and a tendency toward constipation. After appropriate testing for thyroid function, these patients often benefit from thyroid hormone replacement or homeopathic approaches which would stimulate the thyroid gland naturally.

The art and science of improving and strengthening the overall health of the body has a lot to do with the implementation of balance in all aspects of the healing process. Balancing the hormones affects the intermediary metabolism of the body in order to increase energy production and oxygenation, unblocking sluggish enzyme systems.

As the hormones are brought back to their 'optimal' levels, the diet needs to be better balanced in order to help the process set in motion by the improved hormone levels.

All refined sugar, saturated fats (prepared foods with hydrogenated oils, *fast foods*, artificial foods, and red meats), and preservatives should be reduced. In general, foods that are congesting need to be reduced while foods necessary for tissue repair (proteins, vegetables) should be increased. Fresh foods with high vitamin and mineral content and life force have a healthy impact on the body.

Exercise and stress reduction are also important in andropause. Exercise has been shown to increase growth hormone levels. Exercise helps the body eliminate toxins through perspiration, helps the internal organs to function more efficiently, and helps reduce stress.

For some patients, due to the urgency of their concerns, homeopathic remedies are used as an adjunct to the prescribed hormones. For other patients, homeopaths are used as the primary modality in order to support the body's ability to repair and rejuvenate. The homeopathic remedies that I have found to be useful in the treatment of andropause include Testis compositum[®], Coenzyme compositum, Cerebrum compositum[®], and Galium-Heel[®].

Testis compositum works to stimulate male sexual function and improves fatigue, and helps brain and adrenal function. Some people respond quickly to this remedy. For others, treatment continues for several months before the patient notices improvement.

I think of Coenzyme compositum as a *German multiple vitamin*, in homeopathic form because it contains vitamin C, several of the B vitamins as well as some individual constituents of the Krebs cycle.

Cerebrum compositum[®] is good for improvement of brain and nervous sys-

tem function. It can be used for improving memory, nervousness, anxiety, and depression.

Galium-Heel[®] helps the body detoxify, helps to reduce inflammation and supports the body's healing process in all the organs and tissues. Depending upon each individual's case, any or all of these homeopathic preparations can be used in the patient's treatment plan.

Case History #1

A 66 year old business man came in complaining of fatigue, lack of endurance, poor memory, and difficulty handling the stresses and decisions of his life. Blood and urine testing showed that his testosterone and the other 17 ketosteroids were all at the bottom of the normal range. His case was urgent, as his job was on the line. He was started on testosterone transdermal gel (25mg BID). He changed his diet and I prepared a dropper bottle containing Testis compositum[®], Coenzyme compositum, and Cerebrum compositum[®] for sublingual use (10 drops once or twice a day). His turnaround was remarkable. He was impressed with his increased energy level and confidence.

Case History #2

A 44 year old accountant presented in my office complaining of chronic constipation of several years duration. He had previously been through a complete gastrointestinal workup which was normal. Upon discussion, the patient admitted that he had also noticed a decrease in energy level and brain function lately. With thorough testing, his thyroid function was low, particularly his free T3. His androgens were at the lower end of the normal range. We began the patient

on prescription thyroid therapy which did markedly improve his constipation. I also prepared a bottle of Thyreoida compositum[®], Testis compositum[®] and Galium-Heel[®] (10 drops once or twice a day) for sublingual use, which resulted in an improvement in his overall energy level and clarity of mind.

Conclusion

The patients I have treated with this combination of complementary medicine therapies have specifically commented on the beneficial changes in their endurance, strength, mood, mental functioning, and increased libido. With a renewed, positive outlook on life, patients often comment that they wish they had begun this process sooner.

References

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