

Methadone treatment suppresses testosterone in opioid addicts

26 August 2014

Treatment for opioid addiction tampers with the testosterone levels of male but not female opioid users, McMaster University research has shown.

In a paper published today by the journal *Scientific Reports*, the researchers say [addiction treatment](#) may need to change to address the side-effect.

The study found men using methadone, which is used for [opioid](#) addiction treatment, have significantly suppressed [testosterone levels](#) of about a quarter of the testosterone of men not using opioids. In women using methadone for addiction treatment, testosterone levels were not significantly impacted, even considering the menstrual cycle.

Low testosterone in men has been associated with poor quality of life as well as erectile dysfunction, fatigue, and mood disturbances.

"We expect that treating testosterone deficiency will improve outcomes of methadone treatment for patients, including treatment response and retention," said Dr. Zena Samaan, principal investigator of the study.

"Doctors should also ensure the patients are being prescribed the lowest dose of opioids including methadone for effective treatment to minimize testosterone suppression."

She added that this is a particular issue in Canada, the second largest consumer of opioids in the world.

Dr. Samaan is an associate professor of the psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences department of McMaster's Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine.

The study involved information from 231 patients with [opioid dependence](#) receiving [methadone](#) in Ontario, as well as 783 Ontarians not using

opioids. It was funded by the Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the McMaster Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences. The study was conducted by the Population Genomics Program of McMaster's Chanchlani Research Centre, and Ontario Addiction Treatment Centres.

Provided by McMaster University

APA citation: Methadone treatment suppresses testosterone in opioid addicts (2014, August 26)
retrieved 26 April 2021 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-methadone-treatment-suppresses-testosterone-opioid.html>

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