

Australian men care about their health

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A study of male attitudes to health and how they use health services, published in the online open access journal, *BMC Health Services Research*, challenges the usual stereotype that men are uninterested in their health. Rather than procrastinating, men may delay going to the doctor so that they can watch a health problem to see if it will fix itself. Indeed, a picture emerges of men as personal health detectives, monitoring rather than ignoring symptoms, and visiting the doctor only if a problem fails to resolve itself.

The results will surprise those people who envisage the Australian pub-going male as brusque and disinterested in all things medical. When men do see a physician, they usually expect a quick-fix solution.

To challenge the stereotype, researchers involved in the Florey Adelaide Male Ageing Study James A. Smith, Dr Annette Braunack-Mayer, and Professor Gary Wittert of the University of Adelaide, Australia and Megan Warin of the University of Durham UK, interviewed 36 Australian men, some over a beer, about their attitudes to their own health and about when and why they seek professional help.

Their findings suggest that men make a conscious decision to find out about and monitor their health before deciding whether to seek professional help. The researchers identified four factors that influenced the men's help seeking decisions; the amount of time they had to monitor their symptoms, their previous experience of illness and the health services, their capacity to maintain their regular activities and the perceived severity of their health concerns.

"The men in our study were actively engaged in the self-monitoring of their health," says Smith, "We suggest that these findings offer an alternative approach for understanding how we can promote men's interaction with health services across Western cultures."

Source: BioMed Central

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