

Experts debunk health myths about Aussie men

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(PhysOrg.com) -- University of Adelaide researchers have published a paper today in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, challenging the public stereotype surrounding men and their health.

Researchers from the University's Freemasons Foundation Centre for Men's Health say Australian men have been inaccurately portrayed as "disinterested in their health and reluctant to seek help for medical problems".

Professor Gary Wittert from the Centre says this perception has trivialised the real issues that Australia needs to address when it comes to men's health.

"Men are happy to talk about their health in the right environment, but the approach that works with women does not work with men," he says.

The paper based on the work of University of Adelaide PhD student Mr James Smith reveals that men value competence, humour, empathy and a direct approach when it comes to consulting a general practitioner.

"These qualities provide a useful starting point for ensuring that health service providers are equipped to engage men effectively," Professor Wittert adds.

He says the research undertaken as part of the Florey Adelaide Male Ageing Study indicates that men are not faring as well as women in the

health stakes, but the reasons are not as simplistic as portrayed in the media.

"It's not a matter of men `behaving badly,' but responding to a different approach. They want a GP who is direct and straight forward in their diagnosis rather than adopting a consultative manner."

Other research by Mr Smith undertaken with the group also reveals that men tend to self-monitor their health first, which explains why they often take longer to seek medical advice than women.

"The other finding of our study is that men value GPs who recognise their professional limitations. They respect a doctor's willingness to refer patients onto another health professional if necessary," Professor Wittert says.

He says the findings could help inform the Federal Government's current men's health policy.

The University of Adelaide authors of the paper are James Smith, Associate Professor Annette Braunack-Mayer, Dr Megan Warin and Professor Wittert.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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