

Researcher Connects Sexual Dysfunction with High Blood Pressure

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(PhysOrg.com) -- If you can get past the giggles, researcher Taben Hale, has an important finding to tell you about regarding [high blood pressure](#) and [erectile dysfunction](#).

A faculty member at The University of Arizona College of Medicine - Phoenix in partnership with Arizona State University, Hale is studying the connection between the two and is working on what might be the best way to find answers for both common problems.

"Aside from the quality-of-life issue, which is certainly important," Hale said, in explaining her interest in this area of medicine. "The vascular changes that are occurring that could be causing your [sexual dysfunction](#) are probably also happening in the vasculature of your heart."

The connection is clear, she said.

"Men are showing signs of erectile dysfunction prior to other clinical evidence of cardiovascular disease," Hale said. "When you've got structural changes in [coronary vessels](#) it can take years before the damage progresses to the point of angina or ultimately a [heart attack](#)."

But men with erectile dysfunction are showing signs of problems much

sooner.

"Because the same changes are happening in these vessels, you are just seeing the functional output, or in this case lack of output, happening earlier."

Hale has found rats with [hypertension](#) also can have erectile problems since those problems also involve the workings of blood vessels.

Further, it turns out that some of the drugs used to treat rats for hypertension also may improve erectile function. Hale also is working on the long-term effects of hypertension treatment and its effects on both general health and the reproductive organ.

"All of the drug treatments for erectile dysfunction that exist today treat the symptom but not the underlying cause," she explained. So although drugs may help temporarily, they may not be as effective in the long run if there are problems with the blood vessels in the first place.

Hale hopes to continue to seek causes and treatments for blood-vessel problems to give hope to those who suffer from cardiovascular problems and/or sexual dysfunction.

"Whatever pathways are involved in producing these specific changes, if we can find those novel targets to more specifically protect against heart disease, what is happening here may lend itself to new drug treatments."

A native of the Niagara region of southern Ontario, Hale has trained at the most prestigious universities in Canada. She received her doctorate in pharmacology from Queen's University in Kingston and then did post-doctoral work at the University of Montreal.

She is matter-of-fact in giving advice.

"I think what should happen when a man presents with sexual dysfunction - and it is determined to be vascular in origin - is that he immediately see his cardiologist," she said. "And start treating it early."

Hale is teaching pharmacology to the students at the downtown Phoenix medical school.

Provided by University of Arizona ([news](#) : [web](#))

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