MedicineNet Health Research Survey Report

Erectile Dysfunction (ED): Out of the Shadows and into the Medical Mainstream
Survey Results

Prepared by MedicineNet.com
March 2005
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http://www.medicinenet.com/erectile_dysfunction_survey/article.htm
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Executive Summary

Erectile Dysfunction (ED, impotence) is defined by the NIH as “the inability to achieve or maintain an erection sufficient for satisfactory sexual performance” and is estimated to affect 30 million men in the United States and as many as 140 million worldwide. In 2004, Lehman Brothers’ analysts estimated that only 13% of the market is being treated with those seeking treatment rapidly expanding.

There are numerous underlying causes and medical conditions that can contribute to ED, and a variety of treatment options ranging from mechanical devices to surgery. With the introduction of Viagra in the United States in 1998 and the addition of Levitra in August, 2003, and Cialis in November 2003, treatment has simplified. Those with ED can now take medication, a pill, as needed to enhance performance. As a result of direct-to-consumer advertising by pharmaceutical companies for these ED treatment drugs, public awareness has increased. With expanded treatment options and a greater public consciousness, the discourse on ED has changed. ED is now out in the open.

Although ED is heavily advertised, there is still considerable underlying reluctance among consumers to discuss this intimate topic. The Internet has proven a valuable tool for those wishing to research anonymously personal and potentially embarrassing health topics. This MedicineNet.com survey, delivered anonymously, probes consumer activities and attitudes about ED treatment in the following areas:

- What types of information are health consumers seeking?
- What treatment options and medications have ED patients tried?
- Who prescribed these medications and where are they purchased?
- Who looks for treatment, is it patients or spouses?
- What are the underlying medical causes of ED among the surveyed population?

This survey was conducted between February 22, 2005 and March 7, 2005. The data reflects the opinions of a self-identified panel of 321 individuals visiting MedicineNet.com who indicated a personal interest in ED.
Methodology

MedicineNet.com used an eight-question pop-up online survey to query 321 individuals responding to the question: “Do you or someone you know suffer from ED, impotence?” There were 173 respondents, 56.9% of the total survey population, who indicated that they personally have erectile dysfunction (ED). The results reported in this study focus on the segment of the survey population who indicated that they suffered from ED. All were visitors to the Men’s Health content of the MedicineNet.com site. Responses were completely anonymous, and no visitor received the survey more than once, so the aggregated results represent unique individual respondents.

THE SURVEY POPULATION

Survey respondents (321 individuals) included those who suffer from erectile dysfunction (ED), their partners and those who are interested in learning more about ED. A small portion of the sample did not answer this question. Among survey respondents 54% indicated that they suffer from ED. Partners of ED sufferers represented 28% of the surveyed population. Respondents interested in ED were 13% of the surveyed population. 4% of the survey population did not indicate why they are interested in ED but completed the survey (See Figure 1: Survey Respondents and ED).

Figure 1: Survey Respondents and ED
n=321

- Partner with ED - 13%
- Interested in ED - 28%
- ED Sufferers - 54%
- Did Not Answer - 4%
The subset of survey population who indicated that they suffer from ED was asked to identify what type of information about ED is of interest to them. The choices included general information, information about how ED is diagnosed, available treatment options, or information on medications. The 171 respondents with ED were most interested in getting information on medications used to treat ED (30%) and treatment options (27%). 15% were interested in information on how ED is diagnosed and 17% wanted general information on ED. A portion (11%) did not specify their interests (See Figure 2: Information Sought Online by ED Sufferers).

Figure 2: Information Sought Online by ED Sufferers
\[ n=171 \]
Findings

The survey investigated seven areas: which ED treatments had survey participants used, which oral ED medications are survey participants currently using, who prescribed these medications, where do participants purchase their medications, who or what prompted survey participants to seek treatment and what underlying causes of ED were present in the survey population.

ED TREATMENTS AND MEDICATIONS

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the ED treatments they had used. The options included: oral medications, vacuum devices, injections, implanted prostheses, alternative medications such as herbals and topicals, counseling and other treatments. Respondents could choose multiple options, but they did not have to indicate an order, such as used device then oral meds, etc.; therefore, no assumptions can be drawn about the course of treatment. It is clear that the treatment most frequently used is oral medication. 89% of the 116 survey respondents indicating treatments used answered that they used oral medications (See Figure 3: ED Treatments Used). Many respondents who indicated they used oral medications also indicated their use of other treatments. For example, 86% of respondents who indicated they had used injections also used oral medications. Similarly, 73% of vacuum device users also used oral medications. The data shows that although multiple treatment options are available, oral medications are the most broadly used treatment.

Figure 3: ED Treatments Used
n=116

- Oral Meds: 89%
- Injections: 20%
- Alternative Meds: 20%
- Devices: 19%
- Counseling: 6%
- Prostheses: 3%
Survey respondents were asked to identify the oral medication they are currently taking for ED. 92 respondents identified their current medication. Of this sample 47% are taking Viagra, 25% Levitra, 17% Cialis and 11% rely on alternative medications including herbals (See Figure 4: Oral Medications Used by Survey Respondents). Viagra has been on the market longest and has the largest number of users in the sample population. Cialis is the most recent market entrant.

**Figure 4: Oral Medications Used by Survey Respondents**

\[ n=92 \]

![Pie chart showing the distribution of medications among survey respondents. The chart indicates that 47% take Viagra, 25% Levitra, 17% Cialis, and 11% use alternative medications including herbals.](chart.png)
The survey probed beyond the medications prescribed to the type of doctors writing the prescriptions for medications and treatment as well as where patients have their prescriptions filled. 120 survey respondents provided information on the type of physician prescribing their current medication or treatment. The data shows that family physicians are prescribing 47% of the medications and treatments used by survey respondents for ED. 31% rely on urologists for their treatment. Online offers for ED medication fill most online users’ email boxes. These offers usually include the services of an online “physician” who after an online “consultation” writes a prescription for ED oral medication. A small number of patients (6%) indicated that have used an online physician to obtain a prescription for ED medications (See Figure 5: Who Prescribes ED Medication and Treatment).

**Figure 5: Who Prescribes ED Medication and Treatment?**  
\[ n=120 \]

![Bar chart showing the distribution of doctors prescribing ED medications: 47% Family Physician, 31% Urologist, 10% Other, 7% Internist, 6% Online Physician.]

The survey probed where the survey participants using oral medications (Cialis, Levitra and Viagra) go to get their prescriptions filled. Do they fill their prescriptions at their regular local pharmacy or do they seek anonymity at a nearby pharmacy? How popular are Internet and mail order pharmacies among users of these medications? As Figure 6: Where Prescriptions Are Filled shows, 64% of oral ED medication users surveyed fill their prescriptions at their regular local pharmacy. Online pharmacies are used by 15% of the respondents. Only one patient in 5 uses either a mail order (11%) or seeks the anonymity of a nearby pharmacy (10%) as opposed to their regular pharmacy. With almost two-thirds of patients filling their prescriptions locally, the results suggest that consumers recognize ED as a medical condition that they do not need to be ashamed of or hide. A significant number of patients 26% purchase either online or by mail which suggests that patients plan ahead in their use of these medications.
Figure 6: Where Prescriptions Are Filled
n=104

- Regular Pharmacy: 64%
- Online Pharmacy: 15%
- Mail Order Pharmacy: 11%
- Nearby Pharmacy: 10%
TREATMENT DRIVERS

Who or what prompts an individual with ED to seek treatment was probed in the survey? Respondents were asked to indicate if they sought treatment on their own or whether a spouse/partner, a family member, friend, a physician, or advertising prompted them. 66% of those who self-identified in the survey that they suffered from ED sought treatment of their own accord (See Figure 7: Who or What Prompts Treatment for ED?). 15% of survey respondents indicated that they were not currently being treated for ED. On closer examination, all of the patients who indicated that they were prompted by physicians, family members or advertising also indicated that they had underlying medical conditions such as diabetes or heart disease. The data also shows that, although the decision to seek treatment is largely self-driven, there are other individuals who influence the decision to seek treatment.

Figure 7: Who or What Prompts Treatment for ED?

n=166

- Self: 66%
- Spouse/Partner: 16%
- Not Being Treated: 15%
- Physician: 7%
- Friend(s): 5%
- Advertising: 3%
- Family: 1%
UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITIONS

There are numerous underlying causes and medical conditions that can contribute to ED including: advancing age (over 50 years old), diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, vascular disease/hardening of the arteries, treatment for prostate cancer, spinal cord injuries and MS, as well as emotional factors. The survey shows that the most significant underlying factor for ED in the survey sample was age over 50 years old (See Figure 8: Underlying Causes of ED). A further analysis of the data shows that many individuals have multiple underlying causes. For example, 65% of the diabetics also had high blood pressure, and 20% of the diabetics have high blood pressure and heart disease.

Given that being over 50 years old is the single most common attribute of those in the survey with ED, the data was analyzed to identify if ED sufferers over 50 years of age differ in health status. The data shows that this population has the same underlying health problems contributing to their ED – high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease. The only significant difference is a decrease in the number of ED sufferers reporting psychological or emotional factors as underlying causes of their ED (See Figure 9: Underlying Causes of ED in Survey Respondents >50 Years Old).
Figure 9: Underlying Causes of ED in Survey Respondents >50 Years Old
n=100

- High Blood Pressure: 39%
- Diabetes: 25%
- Heart Disease: 16%
- Psychological: 10%
- Spinal Cord Injury/MS: 7%
- Vascular Disease: 7%
- Prostate Cancer: 5%
Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this survey:

• Those who suffer from erectile dysfunction (ED) turn to the Web for information on ED, its diagnosis and treatment and for information on medications. 54% of the survey respondents were ED sufferers.

• ED sufferers came to the Web seeking information on medications used to treat ED (30%) and for information on treatment options (27%).

• Although oral medications (89%) were the treatment most frequently cited by ED survey participants, many had used several different treatments.

• Viagra (47%) is the most frequently used oral medication. Levitra (25%) and Cialis (17%) trail. This corresponds with the time in the market for each drug. Viagra was the first oral medication introduced. It was followed by Levitra and Cialis in order.

• ED sufferers (47%) rely on their family physicians for treatment and medications. Sufferers also rely on urologists (31%) for prescribing treatment and medications.

• Almost two-thirds of patients (63%) fill their prescriptions locally. This suggests that consumers recognize ED as a medical condition that they do not need to be ashamed of or hide.

• Although the decision to seek treatment is largely self-driven (66%), there are other individuals who influence an ED patient’s decision to seek treatment.

• The most significant underlying factor for ED in the survey sample was being over 50 years old; however, the data shows that age is often compounded by the incidence of high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

• ED sufferers over 50 years old less frequently (10% for those over age 50 versus 18% for all ED sufferers) report emotional or psychological factors contributing to their ED.
MedicineNet.com – Additional Resources

Below are links to additional information available on MedicineNet.com.

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- **Reliable and objective** -- each article is written, edited, and reviewed by more than one U.S. Board Certified doctor.
- **User-friendly** -- articles are written by doctors in easy-to-understand language.
- **Comprehensive** -- doctors not only present scientific knowledge, they also explain how they make treatment and diagnostic decisions.
- **Relevant** -- doctors select articles and news items that are clinically relevant.

**MedicineNet.com’s Erectile Dysfunction Overview**

**Erectile Dysfunction Main Article**
http://www.medicinenet.com/impotence_ed/article.htm

**MedicineNet Home Page**
http://www.medicinenet.com

**Diseases and Conditions**
http://www.medicinenet.com/diseases_and_conditions/article.htm

**Symptoms and Signs**
http://www.medicinenet.com/symptoms_and_signs/article.htm

**Procedures and Tests**
http://www.medicinenet.com/procedures_and_tests/article.htm

**Medications (non-prescription and prescription drugs)**
http://www.medicinenet.com/medications/article.htm

**MedTerms™ Online Medical Dictionary**
http://www.medterms.com

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