

Dear sir/madam

With reference to the Senate Select Committee on Men's Health I submit my comments and opinions below:

I am a happily married male 47 years old with three children, 18, 16, 14 years old.

1. With specific reference to the Extract from Journals of the Senate no. 44 dated 13 November 2008 Item 1 (ii) adequacy of existing education and awareness campaigns regarding men's health for both men and the wider community.

The adequacy of existing education and awareness campaigns regarding men's health for both men and the wider community is very poor and for a relatively prosperous society unacceptable. Furthermore awareness in the community of female health issues is both broader and more specific than men's health issues. For example most men are aware of breast cancer, the need to regularly check for lumps and the like, than they are about prostate cancer. If a man ever hears that men can also get breast cancer they almost need to be treated for shock! Also most men would know about the need for women to have regular pap smears. The relevant question to the committee to consider is what do men know about any regular checks that they should have to preferably prevent or minimise the consequences of men's health issues. I asked my wife (whose brother is recovering from prostate cancer) why women are more aware of women's health issues compared to men with men's health issues and her response was simple and to the point "because they are promoted more". Consider Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, Pink Ribbon Day, etc etc. I also have a dear friend recovering from breast cancer hence promoting breast cancer awareness is extremely important. This was just one example of comparing female and male health issues, and even when you consider the risks and consequences (that breast cancer is less treatable than prostate cancer) there is clearly an imbalance in the level of promotion and awareness in the community as a whole.

Since I work for the Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW (RTA) I am aware that male suicide being higher than the national road toll. When I became aware of the actual statistics I was surprised and shocked. The NSW Government State Plan has a Priority S7 Safer Roads, with the target of reducing road fatalities with the RTA being the lead agency for bringing about this outcome. Nowhere in the plan does male suicide even get a mention! Does that mean its not a priority? It needs to be made a priority with a focussed strategy to increase education and awareness of men's health for both men and the wider community.

Not only male suicide but males are overrepresented in heart disease, melanomas, lung cancer, diabetes, chronic lower respiratory disease, and fatal work accidents. Even when the different genetics between males and females are taken into consideration (possibly there are even similar trends in other animal species) the level of overrepresentation is of significant concern.

2. With specific reference to the Extract from Journals of the Senate no. 44 dated 13 November 2008 Item 1 (iii) prevailing attitudes of men towards their own health and sense of well being and how these are effecting men's health in general.

Men are so focussed on what some could say their primal instincts of hunting and providing, that they don't consider their health. This is one reason (other than the higher levels of risks of some "men's" jobs) that men are overrepresented in fatal work accidents. They just don't think the risks and consequences through, they just do the job.

Relating to my comments above, I would go further and say that with men being more aware of female health issues leads to the perception that they are more important than men's health issues. Ignorance is bliss and perception is reality.

Men are not as verbal as women hence tend not to discuss men's health issues in particular prostate cancer which can effect sex drive, performance and even function. Men are reluctant to discuss issues where there masculinity and/or verility could be effected and any actual health issue can effect libido and no man really wants to admit that.

What needs to happen is more promotion of men's health issues. It needs to be high impact, in your face stuff, that men will stop and think about like the recent anti smoking advertisements. When men become aware of statistics and facts, from this awareness experience their attitude and behaviour to men's health issues will change for the better. For example knowing that the old man sitting next to him is more than likely to be having say a problem urinating he can feel more at ease mentioning the subject, even if its in the pub loo after six beers!

Furthermore where caring females have increased awareness of men's health issues they communicate this to men. I am always getting and taking advice from my wife and its 99% right and good!

Anyhow starting to ramble now hence I will close off and advise that I would be happy to answer any further questions or contribute to the Senate Select Committee if sought.

Regards
Craig Murray