

Depression, ED? Could Be Low Testosterone

(NAPSA)—Two years ago, 55-year-old Joe Marklinger visited his therapist every other week in hopes of curing his depression. When describing his situation, he'd talk about feeling sad, a lack of energy and low libido. He avoided interactions with people, and dreaded work so much he sold his business.

Marklinger is just one of 6.4 million men over 30 who exhibit major depressive disorder each year.

Marklinger's doctor prescribed common antidepressants for his symptoms. While the medication seemed to help, his mood was inconsistent. In addition, Marklinger's sex drive and sexual function plummeted, a side effect experienced by nearly 40 percent of patients on antidepressants.

"I went to my doctor for one issue, and came out with two," said Marklinger.

On the surface, conditions like depression and erectile dysfunction (ED) have little in common. However, depression and ED can be a cycle—one leading to the other, and back again. Some men, like Marklinger, may be depressed and experience ED as a side effect of antidepressants. Or, it can go the other way. Men with ED may feel depressed, believing there is nothing they can do to improve their condition.

But recent clinical studies have found testosterone may be a key factor in treating both depression and ED. The conclusion? Men who do not get relief with traditional medications for depression or ED should receive a screening to determine if they have low testosterone, also called hypogonadism.

For Marklinger, it was his wife who heard about a new study and suggested he talk to a urologist. In

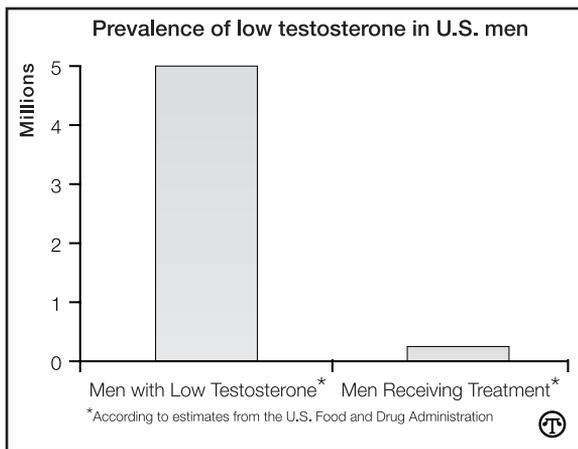
the study, conducted at Harvard's McLean Hospital, physicians had tested depressed men who were not responding to antidepressants. They found that almost half the men had low testosterone. When these men used testosterone gel along with antidepressants, they experienced dramatic improvements in mood, anxiety and libido.

"My doctor told me I had low testosterone after reviewing the results of my blood test," said Marklinger. "The gel he gave me not only restored my sex drive, but it improved my mood, too. I felt stronger, had more energy and I even stopped taking my antidepressants altogether."

Since starting on testosterone replacement therapy (TRT), Marklinger said he's more outgoing. He started a new business, plays basketball and golf and has a renewed interest in sex.

In Marklinger's case, the cycle started with depression and led to ED. But men can experience ED first, which may cause them to feel depressed in response to their diminished sexual ability. For more than half of men between the ages of 40 and 70, ED is a frustrating, embarrassing condition. Many turn to Viagra for help; however, 30 percent of men who try Viagra find it doesn't work.

Researchers at Columbia University discovered that many "Viagra failures" also had low testosterone. When these men received testosterone gel in combination with the little blue pill, the 1-2



combo punch resulted in improved erectile function and overall sexual satisfaction. This concept can be applied to the new impotence treatments as well, which all work in a similar way in the body.

Speaking with a physician about your symptoms and having your testosterone level checked will start you on the right path. The final step before starting treatment is to have your Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) level checked, which can detect your risk for prostate cancer. While there is no evidence that TRT causes prostate cancer, men with existing prostate cancer should not receive testosterone therapy.

For men over the age of 40, an annual screening for low testosterone should be a part of a regular check-up, according to The Men's Health Network, a Washington D.C.-based non-profit organization. The organization recommends visiting www.mytestosterone.com to complete a 10-question checklist to help you communicate with your doctor about your symptoms. Or visit www.menshealthnetwork.org for more information on important men's health issues or for a health assessment.