Men’s Health: Where do we Stand and what Lies Ahead?
Raman Tanwar*, Rajeev Sood, Sandeep Kumar and Ritesh Kumar Singh
Department of Medicine, Institute of Medical Education and Research, New Delhi, India

*Corresponding author: Raman Tanwar, Institute of Medical Education and Research, New Delhi, India, Tel: +919868378312; E-mail: dr.ramantanwar@gmail.com
Rec date: June 5, 2015, Acc date: June 8, 2015, Pub date: June 17, 2015

Abstract
Men’s Health lags behind even to this day despite of increased awareness and much ado. The gravity of the situation is yet to be realized as data from various parts of the world is still missing. Available literature since the beginning of time has portrayed Man as the stronger sex and focused on his sexual abilities. Current studies point to the deficiencies that are inherent to men and suggest reasons for the poor health of men when compared to women. The present article focuses on what has been proposed and established and provides suggestions regarding what can be done further to bring the health of men to the same status as enjoyed by women.

Introduction
It is now an old and established fact that Men live less than women and suffer more [1,2]. The difference in life span of the two sexes ranges from 3-12 years in most regions of the world making it an almost universal phenomenon. Many diseases like metabolic syndrome, suicide, cardiovascular disease, road traffic accidents, occupational hazards and mental illnesses affect and kill men more than women. It has been estimated that most of these chronic health illnesses are preventable (upto 70%) and arise out of lifestyle issues [3] and sociocultural factors [4]. Even though women fall sick more often with minor ailments, they have lower mortality resulting from better care for their illnesses [5]. Contrary to this when men turn up in hospitals their disease is more advanced and less amenable to cure. Right from genetic makeup to the external environment most factors are not conducive for survival of men. The need for health promotion and illness prevention to uplift health care for men is also largely unmet [6] across all age groups and adds to the morbidity. Even adolescent and young adult male health receives very little attention with minor ailments, they have lower mortality resulting from better care for their illnesses [5]. Contrary to this when men turn up in hospitals their disease is more advanced and less amenable to cure. Right from genetic makeup to the external environment most factors are not conducive for survival of men. The need for health promotion and illness prevention to uplift health care for men is also largely unmet [6] across all age groups and adds to the morbidity. Even adolescent and young adult male health receives very little attention with.

The Present State of Men’s Health
Current Literature suggests that men are a weaker sex from the very beginning. A number of factors including prenatal factors, familial conditioning and education influence male health outcomes. Certain influences mediated by epigenetic changes can be transferred genetically and can alter the expression of disease [8]. Males are weaker since inception and more susceptible to maternal stress. Premature birth, stillbirth [9], brain damage, cerebral and congenital anomalies of the genitalia and limbs are more common in the male child [10]. Physiologically a new born girl is stronger and equivalent to a 4-6 week new born boy [11]. Similarly many disabilities also target males more commonly making men fragile as compared to women [12] and males suffer more often from premature death during early adulthood [13].

There is a growing health inequality based on economic factors, age, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Men are linked to hegemonic masculinity and traditional gender roles are widespread in the community [14]. It is well recognized that masculine beliefs are associated poor mental and sexual health outcomes and levels of engagement with health services are also inferior [15]. A recent study of male population in South Korea revealed an increase in disease burden in elderly men due to rapid westernization of society leading to an acute economical health burden [16]. There is an increase in prostate related diseases, erectile dysfunction, heart disease, Hypertension, cancers, obstructive lung diseases, metabolic syndrome, diabetes and mental disorders like depression dementia and sleep disorders. At the same time there has been a better understanding of the interrelationship between cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, prostate health and erectile function.

In many parts of the world sexual medicine is in its infancy and the topic is still a taboo for conservative societies. Men are suffering in
safety owing to lack of awareness and opportunities for cure. Adding to it is the belief that health seeking behavior is a deviation from masculinity [17]. In the MALES study variables like good job, honor and being in control of life and family were realized as important predictors of satisfaction as a male as they were congruous with masculine image [18]. Culture bound definitions and portrayal of role of men usually becomes more important actual health issues that require urgent attention [19]. Many diseases of sexual nature like premature ejaculation and erectile dysfunction or penile deformities are considered a sign of weakness in the male as sexual prowess is considered an inherent masculine trait. Man should have a voracious sexual appetite and it is so believed that man is always ready for sex.

The fact that men can deny sex because they are not in the mood is yet another key route to create a change in attitude of men towards health issues [42]. Men are willing to seek medical care and comprehensive programs on Men’s Health are needed to be effective [43]. It is only the last two decades that we have started making some efforts towards this cause. Activities aimed at increasing health awareness among men are on a rise but there is a scope for much more. There is a need to engage men in the health system and force them to think about their health by enforcing critical health literacy and promoting access to healthcare.

Urologists and more specifically andrologists are most apt to be men’s health experts as they deal with presentation of the syndrome in one form or the other and get an opportunity to identify hidden associations. They have the power to influence a behavioral change
towards better health and refer patients who need specialized psychological or medical help. Similar to the role gynaecologists play in uplifting health care amongst women, urologists can play the role of a torchbearer for men’s health. Management of factors like waist hip ratio and metabolic syndrome can be easily done by a urologist and considered preventive against health problems in men [44]. Developing such preventive side of men’s health can bring a vast change in the years to come; after all, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

References