

Viagra helps men with heart failure

Men with congestive heart failure and erectile dysfunction safely used sildenafil (Viagra) to improve sexual function in a study reported in the *Circulation Journal* of the American Heart Association.

The popular medication may even make patients more likely to take their heart failure drugs, says author Dr. Edmar Alcides Bocchi, associate professor and chief of the heart failure clinics at the Sao Paulo University Medical School in Brazil.

"Heart failure patients may become noncompliant with their congestive heart failure treatment if they feel it causes or aggravates their ED," Bocchi said. "However, our study suggests that treating the ED may make patients more motivated to take their medicines."

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Sildenafil caused no harmful effects and improved exercise performance during treadmill exercise tests in 23 men with congestive heart failure (average age 50) and a history of ED, says Bocchi.

Sildenafil blocks the activity of enzyme phosphodiesterase type 5, which is active in multiple tissues and cells.

The effects of PDE5 inhibition include increased production of nitric oxide, which is associated with improved function of the heart and blood vessels.

The cardiovascular effects of sildenafil have created some concern that the drug might be harmful in men with congestive heart failure.

But there's not enough data on the safety or potential harm of sildenafil in those patients. Most of the men had moderate or severe heart failure and each had been referred for treatment of ED.

On separate days, the men underwent two exercise treadmill tests, which consisted of six-minute walk and a maximum exercise test.

About an hour before the first test, the men received

either 50 milligrams of sildenafil of a placebo. On the second day, the men received the opposite treatments before the exercise.

Those treated with the sildenafil had significantly lower blood pressure and heart rate and improvement in measures of oxygen consumption and carbon dioxide production compared with those on placebo.

Total exercise time also increased. A separate evaluation showed that treatment with sildenafil was associated with higher scores on questionnaire related to erectile dysfunction.

"Frequently, CHF patients and especially their wives are afraid their spouses will have heart failure symptoms or even death during sexual activity," says Bocchi.

"Our study shows that the benefits may outweigh harmful effects of treatment with sildenafil."

The successful treatment of ED in CHF could not only improve sexual relationships but overall quality and success of CHF treatment.

ATHLETE

FROM PAGE C6

infirmities are associated with age and inactivity, it is increasingly important for older adults, both men and women, to maintain healthy habits with exercise and proper nutrition.

For perimenopausal and menopausal women, a combination of weight-bearing exercise and cardiovascular exercise helps, and can even reverse the effects of osteoporosis.

"Hundreds of studies show that even the frailest individuals have strengthened their muscles to keep from falling as they get older. It is never too late to start," said Scheff.

Cycling had been Scheff's primary source of cardiovascular exercise for 25 years. He rode in two Centuries (100-mile tours), his last one being the *Apple Cider Century* near Holland, Mich., in 1990 with his sons, Ed, 35, and Patrick, 33.

Now, he is a volunteer instructor for indoor studio cycling one day per week and for group fitness for the AOA program another day. He also volunteers his time as a certified personal trainer.

Scheff trains by appointment two days per week at the

Livonia Family YMCA. He also uses the YMCA's FitLinix program both for himself and for his clients. FitLinix is a computerized workout notebook connected to the resistance equipment in the Wellness Center that guides the user through proper range of motion, speed of lifting and proper seat settings. It also tracks a personal workout so nothing has to be written down on a workout card.

"The FitLinix program is like having an exercise partner. It is simple to use even if you have computer anxiety. One of the oldest members who works with it is 87," said Scheff.

Scheff lost 20 pounds the first year he belonged to the YMCA and has maintained that healthy weight ever since. He and his wife have made exercise a part of their daily routine.

PERSONAL REWARDS

Not yet a grandfather, Scheff has been assisting the childcare professionals in the Livonia Family YMCA ChildWatch to get his dose of grandkids.

"I love children, and until my own grandchildren come along, I want to spend time with kids. They keep me young," he said.

"In the baby-sitting room, he is known as 'Gramps,'" said senior program director Bob Reithmiller. "He can be seen sitting right on the floor with kids hanging all over him. They love him."

Scheff recently was awarded the Livonia Family YMCA Volunteer of the Year Award at the YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit's Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony in April.

Once a Ford Motor Co. human resource manager, Scheff retired in 1991 after 35 years of service.

After retiring, he attended Michigan State University to obtain his certification as a Master Gardener and was the groundskeeper at Lawrence Tech from 1991-1993. He has put his gardening talents to work at the Livonia Family YMCA by planting flowers in front of the building.

What is Scheff's secret to a healthy lifestyle?

"Staying active," he said. "The socialization is just as much a part of my routine as the physical exercise is. Volunteering is very rewarding, too."

Scheff believes limitations are self-imposed. He suggests starting out gradually until exercising becomes a lifestyle.

When asked what advice he would give other seniors, Scheff summed it up in two

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Don Scheff
Northville Township

words: "Get moving!"

The Livonia Family YMCA offers two types of AOA group fitness classes: "AOA on Your Seat" for those who need more support for balance and strength and "AOA on Your Feet" for those stronger or more advanced. Fila balls, bands, weights and music are all used to motivate the participants.

Seniors also can learn the weight training equipment, cardiovascular machines and free weight exercises through a Wellness Center orientation from a certified personal trainer. You may request Don Scheff.

For more information, call Jenn Kennedy at (734) 261-2161, ext. 3303.

WALKING

FROM PAGE C6

Szczepanski could perform the surgery. During Huzefa's medical care in the United States, his father and 3-year-old sister stayed in India.

Huzefa's medical treatment was a long process.

"First we had to identify the type of bacteria that was causing the bone infection. Then Huzefa was on IV antibiotics for six weeks to clear up the infection before we could perform the surgery. If not, the infection would have continued to spread, and we would have had to perform an amputation anyway. The problem he

was having in India was that doctors could not get his foot to heal," said Szczepanski.

After surgery at Providence Hospital in Southfield on May 10, Huzefa and his mother returned to India on June 28.

The five-hour operation was videotaped so that Indian doctors could perform the surgery on his other foot in a year or so.

He may, however, return to the United States to let Szczepanski and Mozen do the surgery.

RECOVERING WELL

Hakim talks to her nephew about once a week since he returned to India.

"He's doing good and continuing his physical therapy back home. He does all the normal activities like walking, running, biking and swimming," Hakim said.

Szczepanski confirms that Huzefa's recovery is going well.

"She e-mailed me every week and given me updates on his progress," said Szczepanski. "I would recommend several months to a year before the other foot is operated on."

Szczepanski is glad that he was able to help this young Indian boy who had to travel such a long distance for medical care.

"I have four kids of my own who are 5, 3, 2 and 10 months.

My heart just sinks when I think about one of them having to have a foot partially amputated. When you know that you can help somebody and make a big impact on their life, it's very rewarding," he said.

Szczepanski added that Huzefa's family is most grateful for the care provided by local physicians.

"His mother has been so appreciative," he said. "She has thanked us a thousand times."

It's also touching that after his experiences with local physicians that Huzefa now wants to be a doctor so that he, too, can help children with problems like his.

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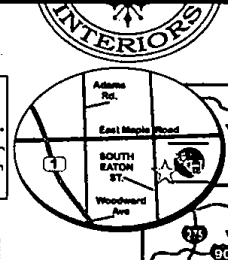
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