20 May 2013

Can testosterone prevent diabetes in men?

Australian men most at risk of developing type 2 diabetes are urged to join a ground-breaking study currently being conducted by Concord Hospital's Department of Andrology.

The $4.8 million T4DM (Testosterone 4 the prevention of Diabetes Mellitus) study, the first of its kind in the world, will look at the potential benefits of treating men with testosterone supplements in conjunction with a dedicated weight-loss program.

As men get older and gain weight, especially around the belly, they often suffer from reduced testosterone levels. Lower testosterone has many implications for men's health, such as reduced motivation to exercise and lack of sexual function. It is also closely associated with type 2 diabetes, which is an enormous health burden for Australia.

The T4DM study is proposing that, given the beneficial effects of testosterone, supplementing it in men with low testosterone levels along with a dedicated weight loss program may prevent progression to diabetes. This possibility has never been tested.

The study will involve two years of treatment (injections every three months or placebo) at a study centre plus free access to the online weight-loss program run by Weight Watchers.

Associate Professor Ann Conway from the Concord Clinical School and ANZAC Research Institute says the study, which will be conducted over at least two years of a participant's life, could have a range of other health benefits for those involved.

“Our hope is that this study will be a life-changing event for many men in Australia,” Associate Professor Conway said.

“Older men who have developed a large belly and are at risk of diabetes now have an opportunity to do something about their weight, improve their lives, and provide us with important research results that could benefit many others in the future."

The health care costs of treating people with diabetes are high and the findings of this National Health and Medical Research Council study will contribute to a greater understanding of the disease and how it can be treated and prevented.

For more information about the study and to participate, please visit the T4DM (Testosterone 4 the prevention of Diabetes Mellitus) study website: www.t4dm.org.au or phone 02 9767 5286.