



## PREVENTION OF PELVIC DYSFUNCTIONS THROUGH PHYSIOTHERAPEUTIC ACTION IN MEN'S HEALTH: LITERATURE REVIEW

*Joan of Arc Melo da Silva e Silva*<sup>1</sup>;

MS Ana Lúcia Wirz Gava, Master in Health Psychology and teacher<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> - Student of the Physiotherapy course at UNAMA <sup>2</sup> -

Professor of the Physiotherapy course at UNAMA

joannafisio05@gmail.com

### SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to better understand the process of preventing pelvic dysfunctions in men through physiotherapy assistance with the support of health education, directing the research towards discovering how men care for their health and self-care, what public policies are in men's health and how physiotherapy can support as a therapeutic and preventive tool for these dysfunctions. The research was developed using a bibliographic and documentary research methodology. We identified that men do not have the habit of taking care of their health on a routine basis, so without prevention it becomes difficult to avoid major problems. It is concluded that preventive treatment and health education combined with physiotherapy assistance can help alleviate pain, pelvic dysfunctions and musculoskeletal complications, providing a better quality of life for these men.

**Keywords:**Prevention, Education, Health, Physiotherapy, Pelvic, Man



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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to learn more about the process of preventing pelvic dysfunctions in men through physical therapy assistance with the support of health education, directing the research in the discovery of how men's care and self-care for health takes place, what are the public policies in men's health and how Physical Therapy can support as a therapeutic tool and prevention of these dysfunctions. The research was developed in a methodology of bibliographic and documentary research. We identified that men do not have the habit of taking care of their health routinely, so without prevention it becomes difficult to avoid major problems. It is concluded that preventive treatment and health education combined with physical therapy assistance can help to alleviate pain, pelvic dysfunctions and musculoskeletal complications, providing a higher quality of life for these men.

**KEYWORDS:** Prevention, Education, Health, Physiotherapy, Pelvic, Man



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### INTRODUCTION

Health is considered to be the balance that exists within a person, a harmony between body and mind, resulting in well-being and quality of life. Thus, for the World Health Organization (WHO), health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not just the absence of disease. Thus, health, in addition to genetics, is a consequence of life choices and habits, and health promotion and prevention focus on adopting healthy lifestyle habits and early identification and control of diseases. (Krug, 2002)

The Brazilian Constitution (1988) in its article 198 defines that “health is a right of all and duty of the State to guarantee, through social and economic policies aimed at reducing the risk of diseases and other illnesses, universal and equal access to actions and services for their promotion, protection and recovery. (Brazil, 1988, Art. 198). In this sense, the State created the SUS to comply with this constitutional provision, but health promotion depends on self-care.

The Ministry of Health warns that men's health deserves greater attention because men live 7 years less than women. Among the causes of premature deaths are violence and traffic accidents, in addition to cardiovascular diseases. Early identification of diseases increases the chances of effective treatment. (Ministry of Health, 2022) This factor may be related to the formation of masculinity resulting from the historical process of patriarchal culture since the beginning of humanity. (Couto *et al.*, 2010). It is clear that this culture influences men's behavior in relation to the search for information and health care, which is considered a weakness, leading them to ignore the importance of basic health care.

Health Education plays a fundamental role in our society by providing information and knowledge to the population about the care that the population should take with their health, especially in promotion and prevention, as it is possible to avoid diseases, enjoying a healthier and better quality life. (Oliveira, 2020). Among the health problems that can affect men, there are pelvic dysfunctions. However, through physiotherapy, these

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problems can be minimized. Thus, this study aims to explore the “Prevention of pelvic dysfunctions through physiotherapytherapeutics in the health of man”.

As a problematization, we analyzed that men do not have the habit of regularly carrying out primary health prevention measures, and are not possible to avoid the injuries, thus, “male resistance to primary care It increases not only the financial burden on society, but also, and above all, the physical and emotional suffering of the patient and his family, in the struggle for preservation of the health and quality of life of these people”. (BRAZIL, 2008, p. 5)

Therefore, due to the lack of health promotion and prevention, men are more susceptible to certain health problems, such as pelvic dysfunction. Among the necessary treatments for this health problem is physiotherapy. Thus, the central problem of this research is: How can physiotherapy act in men's health with a focus on preventing pelvic dysfunction?

To answer this problem, other questions are proposed, such as: How does man take care of his health? How can health education help men take care of their health? How can physiotherapy help prevent pelvic dysfunction in men?

Society has been passing from generation to generation with masculinity being an impediment to self-care for health.of. Since “men have difficulty recognizing their needs, cultivating magical thinking who rejects the possibility of getting sick.” (Brazil, 2008, p. 5)

For Valdés and Olavarría (1998) and Gomes and Nascimento (2006) (apud Couto, *et al.*, 2010, p258) “men’s difficulties have to do with the structure of gender identity (the notion of invulnerability, the pursuit of risk as a value), which would make it difficult to verbalize their health needs in the context of assistance”.

The National Policy for Comprehensive Men's Health Care was created with the intention of including men in the context of primary health prevention, highlighting one of the only means of raising awareness among this social group, which is the Campaign



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“Blue November” whose purpose is to raise awareness of the importance of early diagnosis of prostate cancer.

In this way you can see if “public policies do not recognize the importance of health promotion and disease prevention as issues associated with men, the biggest challenge is not only to include men in PHC services, but also to raise awareness among men about the importance of care”, (Santos, 2015, p.1) since there are no more effective actions than really achieve the objective of making men aware of the need to promote and prevent health.

It is therefore observed that there is a prejudice in relation to the male gender, since, over the years, men's health has been little discussed, generating a lack of health care and the lack of availability of basic guidelines for self-care and its approach to health services. (Santos, 2015)

Therefore, there is a lack of recognition regarding the importance of health professionals, especially in the area of physiotherapy, in guidance actions, prevention of injuries and sequelae of diseases. It was also observed the need for more studies directed at this area, due to the scarcity of material aimed at physiotherapy (France, 2018)

Thus, the relevance of this study is to list physiotherapeutic actions in the prevention of pelvic dysfunctions, and it may also be a reference for comprehensive men's health actions, thus improving self-care and consequent well-being and quality of life.



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### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study will be based on a qualitative approach, using descriptive bibliographic research methodologies.

The most visited virtual databases were from Scielo through the Google Academic search site, Academia.Edu and BDTD.

The bibliographic research in question will have as a collection instrument a narrative literature review, with different types of documents (articles, theses, dissertations, texts *online*).

Works obtained from the search with the descriptors "bibliographic review" will be used. Eleven studies were identified and included from 2005 to 2023.

The articles were analyzed following the perspectives of thematic analysis (Minayo, 1993), initially carrying out a floating reading of the entire collection, identifying the thematic axes and assessing their respective cores of meaning.

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### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### **The influence of sociocultural masculinity on adherence to health care health**

Nowadays, studies on men's health have been expanding in an attempt to understand why this class neglects its health, since the World Health Organization (WHO) shows a higher mortality rate in males compared to females.

*Despite greater vulnerability and high morbidity and mortality rates, men do not seek primary care services like women do (Figueiredo, 2005; Pinheiro et al, 2002).*

The rates highlighted as being so high could be reduced if men sought means for primary prevention, which would be an early diagnosis, but it is known that there is a great deal of resistance to this, whether due to stereotypes where men are seen as more resistant and, therefore, getting sick would be a weakness, or due to fear of discovering that something is affecting their health.

#### **Men's adherence to health promotion and prevention**

Man was created from a patriarchal culture, believing himself to be invulnerable, therefore, getting sick generates discomfort and even shame for the individual, making adherence to health prevention measures minimal. However, there must be an incentive for this care, whether it is done through family, friends or the responsible health agency. Although there is already a National Policy for Comprehensive Attention to Men's Health (PNASH), it has been slowly being inserted into public health and therefore is not as effective. After all, there is always propaganda and actions for the health of women, children, adolescents and the elderly (PNASH, 2008), but men's health only stands out in November with awareness about male diseases with an emphasis on the prevention of prostate cancer.



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Education is necessary in terms of health, but not only as guidance for older children, since the best education comes from the base, the best time to teach something would be from childhood, because according to Vygotsky (1991) “the child is not an empty machine” therefore, he will build his learning during all the processes that will be presented to them, so that, when the child becomes an adult, he is aware of his body and his health and adopts healthier behavior measures. In addition, as for adults, health programs should be included in their daily lives, companies should offer or require that their employees have their medical evaluations up to date, after all, any individual contributes more when their health is in good condition. Therefore, it is expected that the knowledge of individuals about the importance of self-care will be so impactful that there will be significant changes in their psychosocial behavior, bringing improvements to their health.

### **Public policies in men's health: History, access and barriers of masculinity**

Based on arguments that are deeply rooted in history, the male population perceives health care as something that is not peculiar to masculinity, ignoring the importance of disease prevention. In addition to this fact, the way in which the health service positions itself, arouses feelings of intimidation and distancing, causing a lack of knowledge about the numerous possibilities provided by the Family Health Strategy (ESF), resulting in an increase in the vulnerability of this public to mortality rates. (CAVALCANTI, 2012)

Brazilian men live, on average, 7.2 years less than women. Among the causes of premature death are violence and traffic accidents, as well as cardiovascular diseases and heart attacks. For this reason, the Ministry of Health implemented, in 2009, the National Policy for Comprehensive Care for Men's Health. One of the main objectives is to promote health actions that contribute to the understanding of the unique reality of men and provide better support in the Unified Health System - SUS. (bvsm.s.saude.gov.br; 2023)

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In Brazil, men's health has been slowly included in the public health agenda since the launch of the National Policy for Comprehensive Men's Health Care (PNAISH), formalized on August 27, 2009. This policy is based on the following objectives: to qualify men's health care from the perspective of lines of care that safeguard comprehensiveness and to qualify primary care so that it is not restricted only to recovery, ensuring, above all, the promotion of health and the prevention of avoidable diseases. (Brazil, 2009)

In the aforementioned article, the authors refer to the importance of caring for men's health, the difficulties in accessing information to them, and often men themselves do not seek this information because they grew up without this incentive in the environment where they live or because there are no resources in that place. These individuals also often choose to leave their health in the background because they are the provider for their family and cannot stop working and set aside some time to take care of themselves.

However, this is a challenge, as men tend to adopt unhealthy behaviors, which generate risk factors for illness. Cultural factors must also be considered, such as the hegemonic masculinity model, which associates the expression of health needs with a demonstration of weakness and feminization. (World of Health, 2010)<sup>12</sup>

### **Health education in health promotion and prevention for human well-being and quality of life**

The relationship between education, health and their practices is conditioned by complex structural dimensions that require a historical analysis for their better understanding. (VASCONCELOS; 2001)

In this sense, more and more research proves that health, more than genetics, is a consequence of choices and lifestyle habits. However, men tend to pay less attention to their health and have fewer medical appointments. A survey by the Men's Health Reference Center in São Paulo shows

<sup>1</sup>Figueiredo W. Men's health care: a challenge for primary care services. *Collective Health Science*. 2005;10(1):105-9.

<sup>2</sup>Schraiber LB, Gomes R, Couto MT. Men and health in the Public Health agenda. 2005;10(1):7-17

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that 70% of men who seek medical advice were influenced by their wife or children. The study also reveals that more than half of these patients postponed going to the doctor and arrived with advanced-stage diseases. (bvsms.saude.gov.br; 2023)

In this sense, health promotion is part of disease prevention and the quest to keep this individual in society with active and healthy participation. However, the question arises: So, how can we do this? The answer lies in taking this man to educational campaigns, lectures and others, thus generating knowledge for him. This information should reach him, whether in the workplace, in the community or at home, making him aware of the importance of being a healthy man, both for family life and in society. Such information comes from and cooperates with the promotion of public policies on Men's Health, such as treatment and management in the prevention of pelvic diseases. Based on the interviews conducted, regarding the importance of information, 49% of the men interviewed highlighted the importance of the subject in question, emphasizing that talking about pelvic dysfunctions in men is essential for the well-being of this public.

In the last three years, in 2021 alone, the Ministry of Health, through the National Policy for Comprehensive Men's Health Care, highlighted "Blue November" campaign, which talks about the prevention of "Prostate Cancer".

### **Physiotherapy as a prevention tool for male pelvic dysfunctions: Concept and Types of Pelvic Dysfunctions in Men**

The most prevalent urinary dysfunctions in men are incontinence, especially as a result of prostatectomy, but other urinary complaints and clinical conditions need to be considered to facilitate correct diagnosis and treatment. (MARKLAND, et.al., 2010)

We have lost part of the information that voiding dysfunctions involve a variety of urinary complaints and may be related to the bladder emptying or filling phase, in the presence of some alteration in the functioning of the lower urinary tract, whether due to impairment of one or more

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structures that compose it, such as the bladder, urethra, prostate, pelvic floor muscles and also the innervation corresponding to these pelvic structures.

Studies show that pelvic dysfunction in men is characterized by chronic pain located in the pelvis, lasting three to six months. The most common symptoms are pain or discomfort in the perineum, suprapubic area, penis and testicles, as well as dysuria (pain when urinating) and ejaculatory pain. (portaldaurologia.org.br, 2023)

In this article, we seek to research and understand the biggest complaints of the male public, whether it is just initial pain in the pelvic area, hip pain and/or other complaints that allow this man to ask for help and then request the intervention of a health professional for their treatment.

### **Physiotherapy assistance for the prevention of pelvic dysfunctions in men**

Pelvic physiotherapy can indeed contribute to resolving disorders and improving quality of life. It is an area of health that requires multidisciplinary knowledge and interdisciplinary work, such as gynecology, urology, psychology and nursing. (STEIN, 2018)

Since the creation of NASF - Family Health Support Center in the environment of Basic Health Units, physiotherapy has worked together in a multidisciplinary manner with other health professionals in the constant search for this first contact with the patient in primary health care as an instrument for promoting this health and closer to the local community and not only in rehabilitation.

Pelvic physiotherapy treatment for urinary dysfunction in men has shown positive results and the literature has already recognized its contribution to the process of continence recovery in patients undergoing prostatectomy since 2001 (SIC), noting that the postoperative continence recovery period, which generally occurs in 1 year, can be reduced to 3 months with pelvic physiotherapy treatment. (PALMA, et. al., 2014)

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In the clinical practice of physiotherapists, patients with post-radical prostatectomy incontinence, BPH and lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) are more frequent. (interfisio.com.br, 2021)

Specific MAP training techniques can be performed through kinesiotherapy with specific exercises and manual techniques and also through use of “biofeedback”, including associates, with the aim of promoting increased muscle strength, improving awareness and the function of these muscles, (LATADO, 2010) (PINHEIRO, et. al.2012).

Among the techniques used we can mention the “Kegel Exercise”, created more than 80 years ago by the American gynecologist and University of California professor Arnold Kegel. (www.medicare.pt, 2021)<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, as a preventive measure, physiotherapy exercises serve to strengthen muscles and help this man to prevent the prevalent occurrence of pelvic dysfunction. The highlight is the “Kegel Exercise”, which acts on the strengthening and re-education of the pelvic floor muscles

According to Brunhara, 2023<sup>4</sup>, Kegel exercises are beneficial in improving erections and the duration of sexual intercourse, also benefiting the sexual organs and allowing men to experience a fuller sexuality with: greater control over ejaculation, firmer erections, increased libido, etc....

### **How can Physiotherapy Assistance prevent pelvic dysfunction in men?**

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<sup>3</sup>The importance of Kegel exercises for your health (medicare.pt)

<sup>4</sup>Kegel exercises for men: how to do them? - Omens Blog



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### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research brought to light the issue of men's health care and self-care. It is known that patriarchal culture has given men an erroneous sense of invulnerability. In this sense, the male population believes that health care is not an attitude for men, thus ignoring the seriousness of diseases and distancing themselves from the prevention of diseases.

It is important to note that responsibility does not lie solely with men, but with society as a whole, given that it is necessary to overcome the macho culture. Furthermore, the government can also help this population by improving existing public policies and creating new ones.

Finally, physiotherapy assistance can help alleviate pain, pelvic dysfunctions and musculoskeletal complications, providing a better quality of life for these men.

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