

HEALTH VIEW



SPERM MAY HOLD CLUES TO AUTISM

THE origins of a child's autism could be found in their father's sperm. A new study has found links between DNA in sperm and distinct patterns of indicators that could contribute to the condition.

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University looked for possible causes for the condition, not in the genes themselves, but in the epigenetic tags that help regulate genes' activity.

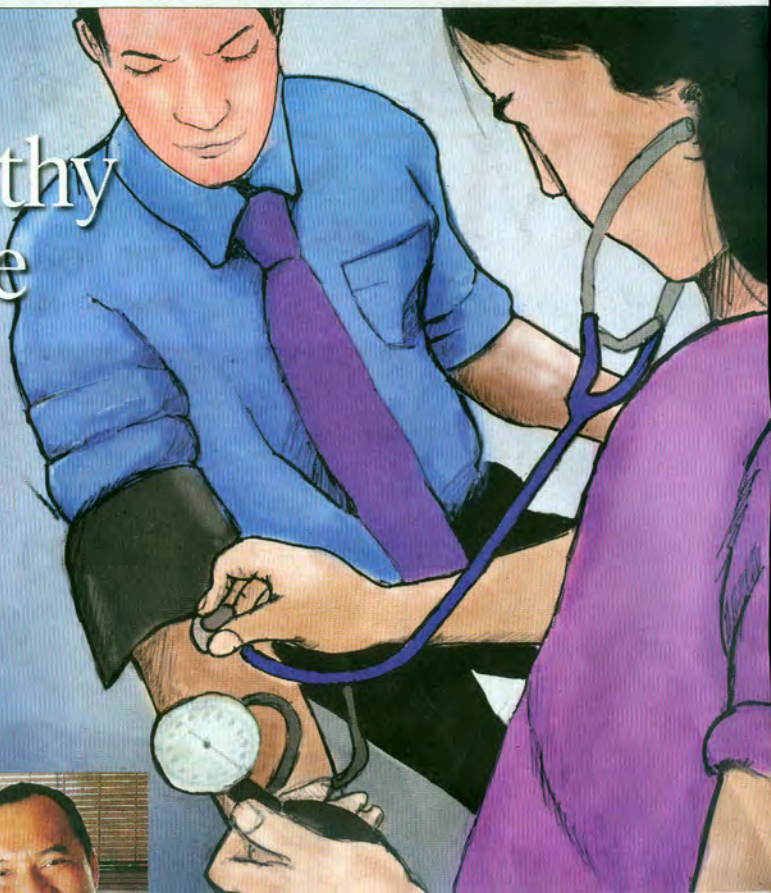
Andrew Feinberg said: "We wondered if we could learn what happens before someone gets autism. If epigenetic changes are being passed from fathers to their children, we should be able to detect them in sperm," added Professor Daniele Fallin, one of the lead investigators.

Sperm are not only easier to sample than a woman's eggs, but are more susceptible to environmental influences that could alter the epigenetic tags on their DNA.

Daily Mail

That unhealthy attitude

Getting men to pay more attention to their well-being is an uphill struggle even for doctors, writes **Kasmiah Mustapha**



Men usually avoid going for medical screenings.

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Prof Dr Zulkifli Md Zainuddin says when men go to doctors, most already have advanced health problems.

MANY doctors agree their male patients only set foot in a medical centre when they are sick.

Lack of awareness of male health risks, and a reluctance to go for medical screenings or talk about any symptom, even to their spouses, point to a general lackadaisical attitude towards their own well-being.

UKM Medical Centre senior consultant urologist Professor Dr Zulkifli Md Zainuddin agrees and says that most seek help only when they have already been ill for some time but at that juncture, the condition has already worsened because of the delay in getting treatment.

"Men have this attitude that it is better to not know. Because of this, doctors hardly see men when they are healthy. When we see them, they have already developed health issues. In this country, the concept of going for screening is not widely practiced, more so among men. They don't even know where to go for health screening. Most of the time, men will go for medical screening because of human resource requirements when getting jobs, or when they are referred by their general physicians."

"I'm sure some men are aware of their health risks, but I can say that they don't think of prevention at

managing their health. And this is a worrying trend."

Subang Jaya Medical Centre consultant urologist Dr Bala Sundaram Mariappan says from infancy up to old age, women are healthier than men, hands down. Out of the 15 leading causes of health-related deaths, men lead women in all except Alzheimer's disease, and that is because they don't live long enough to develop it.

"Men die five years earlier than women, on average. They put their health last and go to the doctor less than women and are more likely to have serious conditions when they go."

Dr Bala says there are several theories on why women are healthier than men. These include the country's policies that see more money spent on the healthcare needs for women and children than on men.



Lung cancer is the second most common cancer affecting men. More than 90 per cent of lung cancers are due to the smoking habit.

"And men, particularly older men, prefer to see a male doctor for intimate issues. But the primary care physician may be a female, so they refuse to go."

"Also, men are encouraged to appear tough and independent. Some men believe that visiting doctors or complaining about feeling ill threatens their masculinity."

HEALTH RISKS FOR MEN

Here are some important physical conditions men should take note of

LUNG CANCER

Risk factors: According to the National Cancer Society Malaysia, it is the second most common cancer affecting men. More than 90 per cent of lung cancers are due to smoking tobacco. Smoking at a young age will increase the risk of developing lung cancer, and exposure to secondhand smoke could also increase the risk.

Preventive steps: Quitting smoking reduces the risk of developing or dying from cancer. Living a healthy lifestyle is also another preventive step against lung cancer. According to the US National Cancer Institute, people who quit smoking, regardless of age, are less likely than those who continue to smoke to die from smoking-related illnesses. Studies have shown that smokers who quit at 30 years old reduce their chance of dying prematurely from smoking-related diseases by more than 90 per cent.

People who quit at about 50 reduce their risk of dying prematurely by 50 per cent compared with those who continue to smoke.

Even people who quit at about 60 or older live longer than those who continue the habit.

HEART DISEASE

Risk factors: While heart disease is more common among women