

Perspectives.
A leading look at healthcare by Bupa Global.

Man Up: The Silent Crisis in Men's Health

Insights from the latest Perspectives by Bupa Global event | December 2022

Inclusive healthcare is one of the most important topics facing our industry.

Businesses are beginning to understand that the health and wellbeing of every one of their people should be a priority. Our Perspectives events are designed to help our intermediaries and customers have better conversations about the future of healthcare.

Healthcare should always empower people to be the best they can be, and that means treating every person as an individual regardless of their needs.

Our 10th Perspectives by Bupa Global focused on the silent crisis in Men's Health. We explored the reasons why millions of men are dying prematurely, and why historically men's health hasn't been a priority for policy leaders, businesses, or healthcare providers.

The global average life expectancy for men is 71 - that's 5 years less than women, with the gap only widening. Men are much more likely to die from heart disease, cancer, and twice as likely to take their own lives. And yet this is a silent crisis, not only because men have historically been unwilling to talk about their health needs, but also because they've been largely overlooked.

The assumption from healthcare providers has always been - those who need help, will ask for it, but we know this isn't the case for many men. Instead, we need concerted action from global health policymakers, business, and the healthcare industry to bring support and education to men where they'll access it, whether that's through work, sport or leisure. Men's health is a foundational issue. If we get it right, everyone benefits.



Dr Petra Simic
Medical Director of Bupa Health Clinics

Global life expectancy for everyone has consistently improved for 40 years, but the one thing that's persisted is the gap between men and women. We need to ask ourselves some tough questions as to why that is.

The State of Men's Health

Men's needs have often been ignored by global policymakers and healthcare providers, and their health has suffered. The reasons for this are complex:

- **Unconscious bias.** There's a mistaken perception that men don't care about their health or are "irresponsible" because they're more likely to drink alcohol, smoke or use drugs.
- **Masculinity.** Health has unhelpfully been conflated with strength. Some men think it's weak to ask for help if they're experiencing mental or physical health crises.
- **Accessing Healthcare.** Men are 50% less likely to seek medical attention than women, and evidence suggests that men find it a challenge to access healthcare. That could be a lack of flexibility in appointment times or a lack of willingness to seek treatment because of the fear of a negative diagnosis.

We all need to work together to improve health outcomes for men. A global health strategy would help ensure another generation of men don't die prematurely.

A Bupa Global poll suggests that just 33% of men as proactive about their health

Studies suggest that men's premature death and poor health costs the US economy almost 500 billion dollars annually¹

There are only seven countries with a men's health policy: Australia, Ireland, Iran, Brazil, Malaysia, Mongolia and South Africa²

The Role of Healthcare & Business

We need to face into the uncomfortable truth that men's health hasn't been a priority for global healthcare providers or business more widely.

Healthcare systems are typically reactive - they are services 'waiting' to be used, and we know that men are reluctant to use them. Healthcare systems are generally led by men, but they've been designed to operate as efficiently as possible not specifically for anyone's individual needs.

Business also has a significant role to play. Richard Jenkins, the Chief Medical Officer of PwC Middle East, told us about the direct link between sick pay and likelihood of men accessing healthcare. Fear of losing income is preventing more men from getting the support they need.

There are reasons to be optimistic for the future, a better understanding of population and demographics, does mean that healthcare policymakers are starting to realise that men's health needs a specific focus. We hope events like this one will also help to bring a fresh perspective to men's health.

As healthcare providers we need to ask ourselves how men can most easily access the services they need, not what's the most efficient way for us to deliver care.
Dr Petra Simic
Medical Director of Bupa Health Clinics

70% of Global health leaders are men, yet there are very few global policies in place designed for men.

Healthcare for men is far too passive; it sits there and waits for patients that never come. We need to start thinking about patients as customers, and how best we can serve them.
Richard Jenkins
Chief Medical Officer, PwC Middle East

We need specific global health policy to address some of the conditions to which men are historically more vulnerable like heart disease, obesity⁴ and some cancers.

Not every man has access to the best healthcare, but we need to level the playing field so there's a much more united, global, approach to men's health.



Peter Baker
Director of Global Action on Men's Health

We know that men haven't been encouraged to take an interest in their health. Many men don't consider it 'manly' to talk about their mental or physical health. We can't underestimate the impact of that.

The Future & Digital Innovation

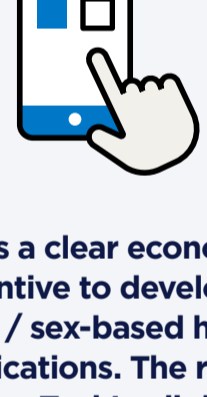
There are reasons to be optimistic about the future for men's health. Business and policymakers are starting to realise how foundational an issue it is.

The digital transition is making it easier for men to access the care they need. Dr Petra Simic, Medical Director of Bupa Health Clinics, told us that the NHS Digital app in the UK, for example, had made a real difference in how men receive care.

Telemedicine and virtual GP apps are a significant enabler for better men's health, and employers need to raise awareness of these services in their male workforce. Richard Jenkins, the Chief Medical Officer of PwC Middle East, told us about private spaces that his organisation have created for their people to take these virtual appointments in the office.



Global awareness of men's health issues is increasing. The success of initiatives like Movember and 'International Men's Health Day' are having an impact.



There's a clear economic incentive to develop gender / sex-based health applications. The rise of 'FemTech' - digital technology for women's health generated more than \$800 million in 2019⁵.



Digital innovation is being developed to tackle some of the underlying causes of men's health issues, such as alcohol abuse and smoking. This includes a US start-up Ion⁶ which offers a wearable for alcohol monitoring and Alavida⁷, a virtual telehealth app for alcohol and drug treatment.

Alex Corbisiero's Story

Alex is a former Rugby international for England and the British and Irish Lions. He retired in 2016 but was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2019. He now campaigns to raise awareness and funding for research into the disease.

Alex told us how important sport is to enable more men to get access to the support and education they need.

"There are men who are going to follow after me that go through this and if I can make the road for them easier to travel, it will be so worthwhile."



Alex Corbisiero
Former England Rugby International

Why is Men's Health Important?

We shared some powerful first-hand experiences of men who've faced their own challenges with their mental and physical health.

We know that typically men are less willing to talk about their health, so this video is about empowering more men to share stories.

We must not just resign men's health to fate. We can change this story; we know what to do.
Peter Baker
Director of Global Action on Men's Health

The key thing is to normalise the conversation about men's health.
James Swatton
Head of Commercial Sales, Bupa Hong Kong

Men's Health: A New Approach

Men's health is an issue that intersects so many parts of society and isn't the responsibility of one sector alone to fix.

However, there's a moral, social, and business imperative to do better for men - how they are currently struggling to manage their health is left mostly to chance, and not design.

It's vital that businesses take a leading role in championing men's health. This will make a real difference, not just to their own workforce but also to wider society and to encourage the policymakers who'll design future men's health strategies. We need a more proactive approach from the healthcare industry. Providers need to deliver services to men where it's most accessible to them.

Men's health shouldn't take priority over any other gender or sex. This is not a zero-sum game where one group wins, and another loses. The power of inclusive health is that you treat the needs of the individual, and everyone benefits. This is absolutely true for men's health.

Some questions for you and your business:

Could you better incorporate men's health in your workplace strategy? E.g a more flexible approach to appointments in working hours?

Do your male employees know enough about the benefits they might have available? Virtual GP and telemedicine for example.

How could you make men's health more of a boardroom priority? Could you commission some research or look at the financial impact?

There's still a silent crisis in men's health. And it's a crisis we need to start making more noise about.

Dr Luke James
Deputy Group Chief Medical Officer and Director of Healthcare Transformation Bupa Group



Interested in hearing more?
You can view the full event recording [here](#) and sign up below to be the first to know about future events from Perspectives by Bupa Global.



¹<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5344012/>

²<https://wchh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/trc.842>

³<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/global-health-leadership-gender-equality-report/>

⁴<https://www.nidk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/overweight-obesity#:~:text=More%20than%201%20in%203.9,2%25%20have%20severe%20obesity>

⁵<https://medcitynews.com/2022/01/the-future-of-mens-health-in-a-digital-world-can-take-a-lesson-from-the-past/>

⁶<https://www.ionwearable.com/>

⁷<https://try.alavida.com/>