

**UNITED STATES: "Study Links Erectile Drugs, STD Rates in Users over 40"
Boston Globe (07.06.10):: Nicole Ostrow, Bloomberg News**

Men over age 40 who use erectile dysfunction (ED) drugs have higher rates of STDs - particularly HIV - than same-age peers, according to a Harvard study published today.

Researchers examined a database of employer-based insurance claims made during 1997-2006 and involving 1,410,806 males over age 40. Of the men, 33,968 had filled at least one prescription for an ED drug.

Men who used ED drugs had higher rates of STDs than non-users both during the year before initiating ED therapy (214 vs. 106 annually per 100,000 persons) and the year after (105 vs. 65 per 100,000 population).

After adjusting for age and other comorbid conditions, men who took ED drugs were almost three times more likely to have an STD than non-users. The odds ratio for HIV infection also was higher, 3.32 in the year before and 3.19 in the year after filling an ED drug prescription.

The findings could have more to do with the habits and temperament of the men using ED drugs than with the effects of the drugs themselves, the authors suggested.

"Younger people have more sex partners than older folks," said lead author Anupam Jena, a medical resident in internal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. "But per sexual encounter, the actual safeness of the sex is probably lower among older folks in the sense that they don't use condoms."

Compared to persons in other decades of life, those in their 40s represented the largest proportion of HIV/AIDS diagnoses in 2007, according to CDC.

"Counseling about safe sexual practices and screening for STDs should accompany the prescription of ED drugs," the study authors concluded.

The full study, "Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among Users of Erectile Dysfunction Drugs: Analysis of Claims Data," was published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2010; 153: 1-44).