

## How do GPs view erectile dysfunction?

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is receiving overwhelming attention in the recent years. Surveys from USA reported that half of the men had some degree of ED, but only about 10% sought consultation from a physician. Physician's attitudes play an important role in their health-seeking behaviour. How do GPs perceive ED? How do GPs perceive their roles in the management of ED? This qualitative study aimed to answer these questions using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

28 GPs in Klang Valley participated in this study in 2003. All had some experience in managing men with ED, and they consisted of doctors from private and public sectors. Most participants were passive towards managing men with ED. They would only discuss sexual issues with patients whom they were familiar with. They perceived ED as a less serious and significant disease compared to chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension. Anti-ED drugs (PDE5 inhibitors) were considered by some as lifestyle drugs which might be abused. Other reasons contributing to GPs' reluctance to prescribe included fear of being blamed if side effects developed, perceived by patients as pushing for the drug, felt that it was the job of the specialists to manage ED and cost of PDE5 inhibitors, especially for men with low income.

This study showed a discrepancy in expectations between doctors and men with ED. GPs should consider patients' expectations and discuss management options of ED with them in an open manner. Bringing up sexual issues in a timely and purposeful way will improve patient's satisfaction and enhance doctor-patient relationship.

*CJ Ng, WY Low, NC Tan, WY Choo. The role of general practitioners in the management of erectile dysfunction: a qualitative study. Int J Impot Res 2004;16(1):60-63*  
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## What do medical students think about primary care in Malaysia?

Traditionally, primary care has been viewed as a discipline which lacks intellectual depth and prestige. However, recent studies have shown a positive change in students' and doctors' attitudes towards the discipline. In Malaysia, more than half of the doctor population practise as GPs, but less than 1% has undergone postgraduate training. Why is there a reluctance to pursue postgraduate studies in primary care? One of the deciding factors is medical students' perception of primary care. This qualitative study explored medical students' perceptions of primary care and the factors influencing their perceptions.

Thirty-three final year medical students from University of Malaya and International Medical University participated in six focus group discussions. The students perceived primary care as a discipline that covered breadth of medicine rather than depth. Primary care concepts such as "using time as a tool" and "using doctor-patient relationship to modify behaviour" were difficult to grasp and remained theoretical to them. Their experience with the GPs in the community heavily influenced their perceptions of primary care. Finally, they observed a disparity between what was taught in class and what was actually practised in the "real world".

This study highlighted the struggle of the discipline to teach primary care. The short posting in the medical curriculum did not allow the students to understand the discipline fully. There is an urgent need to review the teaching methodology and the role of GPs in teaching primary care. This may have a significant impact on the students' decision to choose primary care as a lifelong career.

*Ng CJ, Leong KC, Teng CL. What do medical students think about primary care in Malaysia? A qualitative study. Education for Primary Care 2005;16: 575-580* [\[Link\]](#)  
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