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MEDIA RELEASE

Physiotherapy helps relieve painful male prostate condition

TORONTO (October 13, 2009) – Prostatitis is no picnic. It is a urological condition which causes infection or inflammation of the prostate gland. It is a fairly common health concern, especially for men under 50 and can seriously affect quality of life including sexuality and intimate relationships. However, new research regarding the benefits of physiotherapy in treating prostatitis is promising. Preliminary studies show that physiotherapy can help relieve the symptoms of prostatitis.¹

“Physiotherapy is not a cure for prostatitis, but it will certainly provide a framework for someone with this problem to reduce and manage their symptoms more effectively,” says Rebecca Weaver, a physiotherapist who works at the Bladder Control Centre at the University of British Columbia Hospital in Vancouver.

Prostatitis is a serious medical problem if there is a bacterial infection involved. It may cause a fever and be related to a urinary tract infection. However, the most common form of prostatitis is not caused by infection, and is referred to as chronic pelvic pain syndrome. The main symptoms are pain between the testicles and the rectum, pain in the groin and genital area, and low back pain. Prostatitis can also cause pain with bladder and bowel movements, and with sexual function, including ejaculation. Because it involves these very personal problems, men who have it may be reluctant to seek treatment.

Physiotherapy treatment for prostatitis is similar to treatment for other chronic pain conditions such as low back pain or arthritis. It involves correcting muscle imbalances by stretching and strengthening hip and back muscles, stretching of pelvic floor muscles, patient education on pain self-management techniques, and biofeedback. Biofeedback can increase a patient’s motivation to exercise, so it is a useful tool to improve the relaxation of hypertonic muscles.² Ice, heat, massage, and electrotherapy (TENS) may also be used to relieve the symptoms of prostatitis. In addition, physiotherapists show patients how to manage their pain through relaxation and breathing strategies, and help educate them about healthy bladder and bowel habits.

Physiotherapy treatments for prostatitis will not aggravate symptoms. This means that urologists can refer their patients to a physiotherapist as part of a treatment plan, especially men with chronic pelvic pain who are not interested in using pain medication as their primary mode of treatment.

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“The role of physiotherapy in the treatment of prostatitis and pelvic pain is not well understood, and many urologists may not be aware that there are physiotherapists who treat this condition,” says Marie-Josée Lord, a physiotherapist who has been treating pelvic floor dysfunctions for 20 years. “More education will help doctors and other health professionals understand that physiotherapy can be an important part of prostatitis treatment and other chronic pelvic pain conditions.”

Both Lord and Weaver would like to see more research done on the effect of physiotherapy on prostatitis as well as more post-graduate courses in male chronic pelvic pain, to complement those that already exist for male and female incontinence, and female pelvic pain.

Men who have been diagnosed with prostatitis should discuss physiotherapy as a treatment option with their doctor. Not all physiotherapists treat pelvic pain but those who do often have special training in this practice area and can offer a personalized treatment plan to help relieve symptoms and speed recovery.

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For more information and spokesperson interview in French or English:

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¹ The Role of Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy in the Treatment of Pelvic and Genital Pain-related Sexual Dysfunction. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* Mar.2008 Volume 5, Issue 3, Page 513-23

² The Effect of Biofeedback Physical Therapy in Men with Chronic Pelvic Pain Syndrome Type III. *European Urology* May 2005 Volume 47 Issue 5, Pages 607-611