

Chlamydia a source of unexplained male infertility

by Michael Cook | 20 Oct 2019 |



The potential impact of undiagnosed sexually transmitted chlamydia infection on men's fertility has been highlighted in a study led by Queensland University of Technology (QUT), which for the first time found chlamydia in the testicular tissue biopsies of infertile men whose infertility had no identified cause.

The study has been published in the journal *Human Reproduction*. Men whose tissue was tested were moderately to severely infertile, producing no or little sperm, and the majority had no defined cause of their infertility.

Research leader Ken said chlamydia infection in men has not been as widely studied as it has in women, despite similar infection rates. "Chlamydia infection has been associated with women's infertility but much less is known about its impact on male infertility, particularly if men do not experience symptoms, which is estimated to be in about 50 per cent of cases," he said. "When people have no symptoms they can unknowingly pass on the infection to sexual partners.

"This is the first reported evidence of chlamydia infection in human testicular tissue, and while it can't be said that chlamydia was the cause of the infertility of the men, it is a significant finding.

"It reveals a high rate of previously unrecognised chlamydia infection and the potential role of infection in the failure of sperm to develop in the testes.

"Animal studies by our group support these human findings. Those studies show that chlamydia infection in male mice establishes a chronic infection in the testes that significantly impairs normal sperm development.

"We believe future studies with male patients should look at how chlamydia infection might cause damage to the male reproductive system and contribute to infertility."

Michael Cook is editor of *BioEdge*

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