

## Men's Health

My name is Philipp Tanzer, founder of the Organisation GenderParityUK. We advocate for gender equality with focus on the needs of men and boys, in particular in areas such as legislation, best practice and service provision.

### **What actions would have the biggest impact on male life expectancy:**

Male life expectancy is vastly impacted by two factors: unhealthy lifestyle 'choices' and lack of support/services that are specifically tailored towards men.

The following circumstances reduce unhealthy lifestyles:

- growing up without trauma
- growing up with both parents, present father
- being married
- being a present father
- having reliable, positive friends/role models
- financial security
- having a purpose
- being respected
- having hobbies
- engaging in community
- being a member of a faith community
- positive depiction of masculinity and end to 'male-bashing' and the vilification of men and masculinity

Ways to tailor services towards the needs of men:

- access to medical support outside of 'working hours' (weekend + evening support for working people)
- provide healthcare services and screening in places, working men can access
- mental health support for men works better 'shoulder to shoulder' than 'face to face'
- mandatory annual routine health checks for employees
- a dedicated men's health strategy implemented by government
- change narrative from 'going to doctor is a sign of weakness' to 'going to doctor is like taking car to mechanic or getting an MOT to ensure good performance'
- promotion of physical hobbies specifically for men
- stronger focus on the needs of men in public discourse
- Currently women are labeled as more 'vulnerable' than men and are therefore often prioritized. That is unhelpful, since men have an overall worse outcome

### **Cancer prevention:**

Respected male public figures, especially athletes are best suited to raise awareness.

It is proven that wives/female partners play an important role in 'diagnosing' their men and sending them to the doctor. This should be used (without encouraging nagging). Poster campaigns in men's bathrooms of bars, music and sport venues can reach many men incl singles. These campaigns should be humorous and witty rather than lecturing.

Regarding Prostate cancer: Compulsory checks for employees and those receiving benefits from a certain age. For the self employed a campaign by post, highlighting that not looking after their health could jeopardize their business.

## **Suicide:**

- Men/boys experience constant 'men-bashing' and negativity from media, politicians and culture. Men/masculinity are constantly associated with 'toxic masculinity', 'manspreading', 'patriarchy' and 'misogyny'. They are falsely depicted as the default 'bad guy' from an early age, they are told that the 'future is female'. This is not helpful.
- Boys/men are expected to communicate their emotions/struggles in a 'female' way. They are not allowed to express justified anger, expressions of sadness, and experience of discrimination are being ridiculed and rejected. There needs to be a male-positive approach to mental health that rejects the 'toxic masculinity' framework
- Better access to mental health support
- male suicide is often connected with loss of income and loss of relationship. There needs to be targeted support for men experiencing loss. Men/fathers need equal support in divorce/custody cases and fathers need equal access to their children.
- male victims of domestic abuse must be fully recognised and supported at the same level as female victims. This must include cases of emotional, verbal and economic abuse and coercive control. Currently male victims are further victimised by the government's approach (they are even labeled 'Victims of Violence against Women and Girls')
- In many areas men are treated as second class citizens. Example: a man who has been killed is viewed as less tragic than a woman being killed. Homelessness in women is viewed as far worse than homelessness in men, even though the outcomes are worse for men than for women. Our society views people through a very gendered/sexist lens, this is reflected in government policies and recommendations.
- .promotion of male 'safe spaces' such as the men sheds, male sport clubs. These spaces need to be spaces of free expression. Anger, frustration and sadness need to be expressed, not suppressed. A climate of 'political correctness' and controlled speech prevents frustrations to be expressed and tension from being resolved.
- Training for barbers, coaches and bartenders to identify issues experienced by men and being able to offer support/direct them towards support. This training must be 'pro-male' not 'anti toxic masculinity'
- men/boys who struggle with social anxiety or autism need to be supported, not ostracized. This includes so-called 'INCELS' who already feel rejected by society. Most of the issues they express are real struggles and their anger/dispair often understandable. Other marginalised groups of society who express their frustration receive support and understanding, struggling men are attacked, labeled misogynists and even terrorists. Many of these men are suicidal.

Why do men use health services less often:

To some extent this can be explained by natural personality traits. These factors are almost impossible to change and we will therefore not focus on them

Factor that can be improved:

- opening hours of health services are not suited for people who work full time (this affects more men than women)

- The health care is associated with 'weakness', men respond better to the concept of 'staying strong'
- health care needs to be part of employment routine
- There is a negative stigma around men being sick 'Oh, it's just a man-flu'
- asking for help is associated with weakness, we need to communicate that looking after your health can be a masculine trait to be a provider, active father. 'I could have seen my kids growing up I I hadn't dies of a heart attack'

### **Community-based and sport based projects:**

They play an important role and this needs to be expanded.

To increase the availability, there should be positive reporting on these projects in the media, local projects should be encouraged, awards given.

Organisations such as the Mensheds and Lads need Dads should be funded.

Other positive activities that could work well for men of different ages are: hiking, demolition and building projects, fishing, outdoor and survival activities.

As mentioned before, it is important that these projects are safe spaces for masculine expression. Men react positively to banter (even friendly insults), physical challenges and competition. Many men find it easier to bond over a beer. While too much alcohol can be harmful, a restrictive environment can hinder men from feeling relaxed and able to express themselves.

### **Health Equity across different population groups:**

The best solution is to encourage by-and-for support. People from local communities often know best what people of their community need.

A one-size-fits-all approach will feel sterile and not connect with most men.