

Men's Health Month & More

AN INTERVIEW WITH EURACARE'S

Dr Kudzo W. Seneadza

Dr Kudzo Seneadza is the Resident Medical Officer at EURACARE Advanced Diagnostics and Heart Centre in Accra. He explains to us, in this interview conducted with the kind cooperation of Ms Jana Joeaas, Marketing Consultant with Euracare Advanced Diagnostics and Heart Centre, the various types of medical screening or health screening available at EURACARE. According to Dr Kudzo Seneadza, a basic principle at Euracare is to, as much as possible, offer everyone the opportunity to have their health issues sorted out, not only when a problem has occurred but also, and more importantly, as a preventive measure. Screening tests are therefore available to make sure of the health status of an individual. Just like one takes their car to the DVLA every year to ensure that the car is roadworthy, it is important that as human beings, we make sure that our bodies are in shape to carry us through another year. And it's good to come in, at least once every year, to have screening tests done.

ENJOY: June is Men's Health Month at EURACARE. What is it about?

Dr Seneadza: Indeed, June is the month we have set aside to observe as Men's Health Month. Talking of men's health precisely, the package is rather comprehensive. The process will take you through doctor/patient dialogue, looking into patients' history, addressing particular issues, conducting tests, letting patients' understand every step being taken, prescribing changes to be made in patients' lifestyle, etc.

ENJOY: You are a heart centre. Tell us what is offered here.

Dr Seneadza: Talking of cardiovascular health, we have a lot to deal with. We will look at blood pressure, cholesterol level, and blood sugar level, given that diabetes is now seen as a cardiovascular disease as well. Those three elements play a very important role in the development of heart attacks and strokes, so we make sure those indices are controlled and satisfactory. Then the patient will be told about things he ought to be doing to improve his cardiovascular health, for instance diet, exercise et al. Also, we will do an ECG to look at your heart, and a chest x-ray to check your chest and your heart as well.

ENJOY: Any other male health issues?

Dr Seneadza: In addition to the cardiovascular tests, other

key male issues, like the prostate, will be tackled. We will do a screen of the prostate gland, look at the PSA and see what the values are like. It is important to do it every year because it is not just about the absolute values, but also the trend: is it rising up? If for instance it is within normal but has doubled within a year, it is vital we go a step further to make sure nothing is wrong in the prostate gland. So, men ought to be mindful of this, it's a simple blood test to check your PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen). We will also go ahead and do the digital rectal examination, to actually feel the prostate with our finger to see its texture and consistency. Other tests are available to make sure the prostate is hale and hearty.

ENJOY: The package seems complete indeed.

Dr Seneadza: And that is not all! For men over 50, EURACARE has stool occult blood tests to screen for colon or rectal cancer. Then we will look at the major organs as well, the liver, the kidney and the thyroid.

ENJOY: What about sexual health?

Dr Seneadza: On the score of sexual health, which is a major issue for men, there will be checks on the testosterone levels to make sure everything is fine. There will be urinalysis as well for signs of infection in the urine. Also, the doctor will have a conversation with the patient to try and find out whether there are any risk factors for any particular issues, and talk to him about his sexual health in general. Issues of erectile dysfunction and/or loss of libido will be addressed as well.

ENJOY: What piece of advice do you have for men?

Dr Seneadza: We are saying this is the package for men under the

Men's Health Month, but in point of fact, we recommend this once a year for everybody.

ENJOY: In general terms, how would Dr Seneadza evaluate men's health status in Ghana today? Would you say the average Ghanaian man is healthier today than he was a decade ago?

Dr Seneadza: I would say over the past few years, there is an increasing trend of cardiovascular diseases in particular. We have hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol; and the other aspect is that the affected population is getting younger and younger! A lot of people in their thirties are already having high blood sugar, high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels, and I think it has to do with lifestyle changes: we're becoming more and more sedentary, the use of cars has so much democratised that walking is less and less an option, no more time for exercise because we're busier and busier, and, still for lack of time, we eat more junk food.

So, more and more, a lot of young people are having issues with hypertension, diabetes and cholesterol, and interestingly – and not surprisingly though – with erectile dysfunction as well, because this is related with those three conditions: erectile dysfunction can be a cardiovascular disease as well, and that means those three issues, which are unfortunately on the rise, affect sexual functions. We have seen patients in their twenties coming for issues having to do with erectile dysfunction...

ENJOY: This is scary! We ought to be a lot more health conscious.

Dr Seneadza: Precisely! There is another trend we are noticing: the back pain. It seems this has to do with long hours we spend in the traffic as well as extended sitting positions we have in our offices while we don't necessarily have ergonomic chairs. And that cut across ages actually. Issues with the spine are more and more common. Here we would recommend more exercise, weight loss because the spine carries the weight to the body, and good sitting posture. Also neck pain, cervical spondylosis and obesity are on the rise.

ENJOY: What is your theory about that situation? And what can be done?

Dr Seneadza: Generally it all comes back to the change of lifestyle, where people do not move enough, people can afford junk food and go for it, people prefer to sit and play video games and chat on social media instead of exercising, etc. To correct the trend, it will take a change of mind, exercising is very much important. It is recommended to exercise at least 150 minutes a week, that is 30 minutes a day for 5 days of moderate to quite intense physical activity like aerobics to make you sweat a bit and get your heart pumping. That can be just brisk walking around your house. Also it pays to use the stairs rather than the lift, make time to walk around the office during lunch time rather than keep seated, and park your car away from your work place rather than drive through to the office building parking. 🚶

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