

Hormonal Health Is Mental Health: Routine Testosterone Screening and Treatment Access for Men's Mental Wellness

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BACKGROUND

Middle-aged men experience rising rates of depression, fatigue, and suicide, often overlapping with age-related testosterone decline. Symptoms of hypogonadism include: low mood, anhedonia, irritability, and low energy, which frequently mimic primary depression and are unrecognized without hormonal testing. Yet U.S. guidelines do not recommend routine screening. Insurance coverage is typically restricted to men with documented sexual dysfunction, creating barriers to diagnosis and treatment.

OBJECTIVES

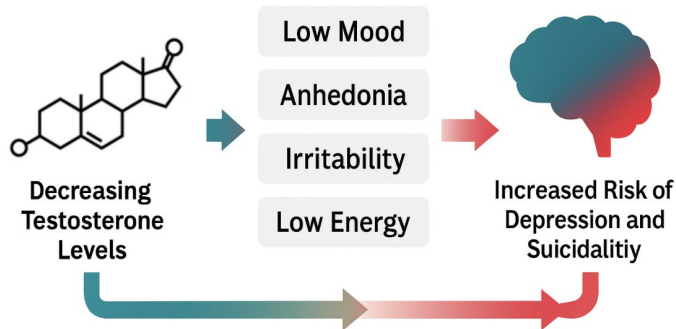
To review evidence linking testosterone deficiency with mental health outcomes and propose a framework for standardized screening and equitable access to treatment.

METHODS

Systematic review of thirty-eight studies (PubMed, Embase, PsycINFO, 2010–2025) evaluating associations between testosterone, depression, and suicidality. Extracted data on lab coverage, cost, and treatment access.

RESULTS

- Low total testosterone (<300 ng/dL) = **1.8–3.2× higher odds of depression/suicidal ideation**
- TRT improves PHQ-9 scores, vitality, and quality of life
- Coverage limited: Medicare reimburses only with hypogonadism ICD-10; private insurers require sexual-symptom documentation
- Barriers drive patients toward less regulated “low-T” clinics



PROPOSAL

1. Routine screening for men ≥ 40 -45, repeated with mood/fatigue/libido symptoms, in line with rise in depressive/suicidal symptoms in men.
2. Reclassify testosterone, LH, FSH, SHBG labs as preventive men's health screening.
3. Encourage CMS/private payers to cover hormonal testing beyond sexual-function criteria.
4. Launch AUA-led education to reduce stigma of low testosterone

IMPACT

Covering testosterone testing as a preventive service could enable earlier detection of hormonal causes of depression and support national suicide-prevention goals.

CITATIONS



Abbreviations: TRT – Testosterone Replacement Therapy; PHQ-9 – Patient Health Questionnaire-9; LH – Luteinizing Hormone; FSH – Follicle-Stimulating Hormone; SHBG – Sex Hormone-Binding Globulin; CMS – Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.



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