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The Medicalisation of Male Menopause in America

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Summary

The topic of male menopause occupied space on the medical radar screen from the late 1930s through the mid-1950s, then virtually disappeared for the next four decades, until the late 1990s. By contrast, articles on this subject appeared in American popular magazines and newspapers at a consistent, if low-level, rate throughout the same period. This essay

describes how the male menopause became medicalised, not by the driving forces of academic researchers and influential clinicians, but instead by a model perpetuated by lay people and medical popularisers. A medicalised conceptualisation of the body and the life-cycle had become widespread by the second half of the twentieth century, as Americans grew accustomed to regarding their lives through the lens of medicine. People came to expect medicine to provide a cure for any ailment; in the wake of the development of the so-called wonder drugs, no affliction seemed beyond medical and pharmaceutical intervention. A medicalised model had also been effectively produced for understanding and treating the menopause in women; a parallel, if not identical, stage in the life-course of men seemed reasonable. This framework, rather than persuasive evidence from the research laboratory or clinic, helped to medicalise male menopause and provided the basis for its eventual pharmaceuticalisation at the end of the twentieth century.

Keywords: [male menopause](#), [andropause](#), [climacteric](#), [testosterone](#), [hormone replacement therapy](#), [mid-life crisis](#), [ageing](#), [impotence](#)

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