

ORIGINAL RESEARCH—ANATOMY/PHYSIOLOGY

Erect Penile Length and Circumference Dimensions of 1,661 Sexually Active Men in the United States

Debby Herbenick, PhD, MPH,* Michael Reece, PhD, MPH,* Vanessa Schick, PhD,* and Stephanie A. Sanders, PhD^{†‡}

*Center for Sexual Health Promotion, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA; [†]The Kinsey Institute for Research on Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA; [‡]Department of Gender Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. Penile size continues to receive popular and empirical attention. Little is known about the process of self-measurement and whether the behaviors a man engages in to become erect for self-measurement are associated with his erect penile dimensions.

Aims. The article aims to assess men's erect penile dimensions in a study in which the men would presumably be motivated to report accurate information about their penis size; and to explore associations between men's erect penile dimensions, their method of measurement, and their demographics.

Methods. Data are from an Internet-based baseline phase of a large prospective daily diary study that compared men's use of a standard-sized condom to men's use of a condom sized to fit their erect penis.

Main Outcome Measures. The main outcomes are participant characteristics, activities engaged in during self-measurement process, and self-reported erect penile length and circumference.

Results. For this sample of 1,661 men, the mean erect penile length was 14.15 cm (SD = 2.66; range = 4 to 26 cm), and the mean erect penile circumference was 12.23 cm (SD = 2.23; range = 3 to 19). Participant characteristics were not associated with measured length or circumference. Most men measured their penis while alone, using hand stimulation to become erect.

Conclusions. In this sample of men who measured their erect penile length and circumference for the purposes of receiving a condom sized to fit their erect penis, we found a mean erect penile length of 14.15 cm and a mean erect penile circumference of 12.23 cm. The self-reported erect penile dimensions in this study are consistent with other penile dimension research. Also, findings suggest that mode of getting an erection may influence erect penile dimensions. Additionally, how a man becomes erect for self-measurement may be associated with his erect penile length and/or circumference. **Herbenick D, Reece M, Schick V, and Sanders SA. Erect penile length and circumference dimensions of 1,661 sexually active men in the United States. J Sex Med 2014;11:93–101.**

Key Words. Penis Size; Penile Length; Penile Circumference; Penile Dimensions

Introduction

Questions related to the range of penile dimensions continue to receive popular and empirical attention. In the past eight decades, a number of studies have assessed penile dimensions of men from around the globe, including the United States, France, Germany, Korea, India, Nigeria, Scotland, Iran, Egypt, Greece, Italy,

Israel, and Turkey [1–6]. Study samples have included men from the general population, men with erectile dysfunction, as well as men seeking penile enlargement surgery [1–10].

Penile measurements are commonly conducted by having men or clinicians measure the length and circumference of the penis in a flaccid, stretched, or erect state. While stretched, compared with unstretched, measurements of the flaccid penis are

a more accurate predictor of erect penile dimensions [9], this methodology may introduce bias if experimenters vary in the amount of force used to stretch the penis. Thus, erect penile dimensions are largely regarded as the least biased measurement of penis size. Still, studies that report erect penile dimensions have been methodologically complicated. Research methodologies that involve having a clinician measure study participants' erect penises may have, as a limitation, that—in the presence of a clinician—men may find it difficult to become aroused enough to get or maintain an erection sufficient for measurement by a member of the research team. For example, in a study of about 300 men, 25% were unable to achieve or maintain an erection sufficient for measurement [11]. In addition, men with larger-sized penises may self-select to be measured by clinicians, as may have been the case in a study of penis size that involved asking men (mostly male college students) on spring break to have their erect penis measured by medical staff [11]. The resulting average erect penile length (5.9 in) was larger than had been found in several other studies of erect penile dimensions.

Other research protocols have involved asking men to measure their own erect penis and then report data back to researchers. Such research has had, as a limitation, the possibility that men may report inaccurate penile measurements to the research team. Primarily, the concern has been about men overreporting their penis size given that, in contemporary Western cultures, larger penises tend to be regarded more favorably than penises of smaller sizes [12,13]. Additionally, past research has demonstrated that men tend to underestimate their penis size (i.e., a greater proportion of men report that their penis is average or below average in size) and many men seek to increase the size of their penis through pills, exercise, devices, or surgeries [14–16].

Data for the present study are from the baseline phase of a larger study that involved the testing of two types of condoms [17,18]. In our study, men enrolled in a study of a condom designed to fit their erect penile dimensions in terms of both length and circumference. Consequently, we communicated to them that it was important that they measure and report accurate penile size data so that they would receive condoms sized to fit their own erect penis. Thus, in contrast to most research that relies on participants to accurately assess their penis without retribution for inaccurate assessments, men in our study may have been motivated to measure their penis carefully and to

report accurate data (rather than to over- or under-report their penile dimensions).

Aims

The purpose of the present study was to assess men's erect penile dimensions in a study in which the men would presumably be motivated to report accurate information about their penis size. A secondary purpose was to explore associations between men's erect penile dimensions, their method of measurement, and their personal characteristics.

Methods

Data are from the baseline phase of a large prospective daily diary study—the Condom Fit and Feel Study—that compared men's use, during vaginal and/or anal intercourse, of a standard-sized condom to men's use of a condom sized to fit their erect penis. More detailed information about participants, methods, measures, and outcomes are reported elsewhere [17,18]. All study methods and protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the authors' institution.

A total of 1,824 men living in the United States were recruited through electronic advertisements posted on sex, humor, and adult-oriented websites. Print advertisements were placed in community newspapers and sexually transmitted infection (STI)/HIV prevention organizations in seven U.S. states that were selected for their disproportionately high rates of STIs and HIV and because they were, collectively, geographically diverse. Men who visited the study website were presented with basic information about the study as well as a set of questions to determine their eligibility for study participation. Eligibility criteria included being at least 18 years old, having no history of adverse reactions to condoms, having a valid e-mail address and mailing address for study communications and receipt of study condoms, and being willing to use condoms during the study. Men who were eligible to participate in the study viewed an electronic consent form. Those who consented to participate in the study were able to download printed materials, including two erect penile measurement tools (one that used a letter-coding measurement system and a second that consisted of a centimeter-based measurement system) and detailed, illustrated directions about how to measure their erect penis, from the underside base and choosing the letter or numerical code that is

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