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# **PDGF-mediated PI3K/AKT/ $\beta$ -catenin signaling regulates gap junctions in corpus cavernosum smooth muscle cells**

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## **Abstract**

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is the most common sexual disorder that men report to healthcare providers. Gap junctions (GJs) are thought to be responsible for synchronous shrinkage of corpus cavernosum smooth muscle cells (CCSMCs), and play thus an important role in the maintenance of an erection. Hypoxia has been suggested as a pathological mechanism underlying ED. Here we demonstrate that hypoxia increased the expression of platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF) and the main GJ component connexin (Cx)43 in CCSMCs. Inhibiting PDGF receptor (PDGFR) activity decreased Cx43 expression. Treatment with different concentrations of PDGF increased the levels of phosphorylated protein kinase B

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