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# Focus on Health

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November 2008

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## New Use for Popular Drugs

**T**he 1998 Nobel Prize in medicine was shared by three researchers who elucidated the huge potential role of the Nitric Oxide Pathway in human health especially in relation to cardiovascular disease. This pathway is stimulated by a group of drugs called PDE-5 inhibitors, which are Viagra, Cialis, and Levitra. Unfortunately these drugs, which are well known for the treatment of erectile dysfunction, were priced so high by the pharmaceutical companies who had patents on them that daily usage was financially impossible. Now generic versions, such as Vardenafil (Levitra) are appearing on the Internet and are obtainable with or without prescription. Are they safe for those with heart or peripheral vascular disease? A July 2005 article from Harvard Medical School says they are, provided they are not combined with nitrates such as nitroglycerin, erythromycin, and certain anti-fungal and anti-HIV medications. It is a great misfortune that these facts are not widely known, even among cardiologists.

Other conditions that might benefit from PDE-5 inhibitors include heart failure, brain aging, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, atrial fibrillation, cardiomyopathies, chronic kidney disease, and aging in general.

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## Cancer Indicators

**Y**our palms may warn of cancer elsewhere in the body, especially if you are elderly. Doctors have reported a link between cancer and an odd syndrome affecting the hands of elderly people. A case of ovarian cancer was recently found and reported from London's Royal Free Hospital. Prostate, lung, breast, and pancreatic cancers may also produce a chemical called connective tissue growth factor, or CTGF, which is responsible for the connective tissue changes causing curling or thickening of the palm with swelling of the fingers making the hands look wooden (called palmar fasciitis) and finger joints to swell.

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## Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms

**V**ardenafil treats lower urinary tract symptoms associated with benign prostatic hypertrophy according to an article in the journal *Urology*.

## And the Ankle Bone's Connected to the ... Bladder?

**O**veractive bladder, often associated with urinary urgency, urinary frequency, nocturia, and urinary incontinence, can be very disturbing and distressing to patients. Conventional therapies, which include anticholinergic medication, biofeedback, implantable (central) neurostimulation, and behavioral therapy, have limitations. Side effects frequently limit the efficacy of anticholinergic medication. Percutaneous Tibial Nerve Stimulation (PTNS) is a procedure that has proven to help many patients with overactive bladder. Common nerve roots are shared by the posterior tibial nerve and the bladder. A TENS Unit (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) made by Avazzia located here in Dallas may provide the solution. It also can be used for foot reflexology, knee, hip, and sacroiliac pain.

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