

The Andrology Working Group of the Society of Urological Surgery in Türkiye: Bridging Academic Gaps and Advancing Male Reproductive or Sexual Health

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Abstract

The Andrology Working Group of the Society of Urological Surgery in Türkiye was established to address the lack of a formal andrology subspecialty in Türkiye and to advance male reproductive and sexual health. With a youth-driven approach—where young professionals play a leading role in organizing educational programs, conducting research, and contributing to advancements in clinical practice—the group fosters collaboration in key subspecialties, including male infertility, erectile dysfunction, and ejaculation disorders. By bridging academic gaps and supporting young professionals, the group plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of andrology in Türkiye. Notably, the group has facilitated over 25 national and international training programs and contributed 14 peer-reviewed publications, directly impacting andrology education and clinical practice in the region.

Keywords: Andrology, basic science, general urology

Introduction

Andrology, the branch of medicine that addresses male reproductive and sexual health, has a rich history dating back to ancient times. Early descriptions of male reproductive health and sexual dysfunction can be found in ancient Egyptian and Greek medical texts, underscoring humanity's long-standing interest in understanding and addressing these issues (1,2). In the modern era, andrology emerged as a distinct field in the mid-20th century, gaining momentum with advances in endocrinology, microsurgery, and reproductive technologies (3).

Despite significant global progress, the absence of an official andrology subspecialty within urology in Türkiye has created a substantial educational and academic gap. This has limited the development of systematic training and comprehensive research in the field. The shortage of scientific publications

and weak collaborations with international societies have further contributed to insufficient online education programs, restricting access to up-to-date knowledge and training. Additionally, female sexual health and transgender urology remain underrepresented within urology, resulting in limited awareness and structured educational efforts. Addressing these deficiencies required a systematic approach that integrated both theoretical and practical training while fostering inclusivity in sexual and reproductive health education. Recognizing this need, the Society of Urological Surgery in Türkiye (SUST) established the Andrology Working Group on March 31, 2018. This initiative aims to provide academic support, empower young professionals, and advance male reproductive and sexual health in Türkiye. While some European countries, such as Germany and Hungary, officially recognize andrology as a subspecialty, others, including Italy and Spain, offer structured master's programs for certification in the field (4). Similar challenges exist in countries

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where andrology lacks subspecialty status, underscoring the global relevance of this initiative.

Since its establishment, the group has played a pivotal role in medical education, research, and professional development. Regular meetings and scientific discussions provide members with opportunities to critically analyze emerging advancements in andrology. Unlike traditional academic settings, where senior experts typically lead discussions, the group promotes an inclusive environment, actively encouraging early-career professionals to engage in academic discourse and present their research. This approach has enhanced the visibility of young researchers in national and international congresses, fostering knowledge exchange and professional networking within the global andrology community. Through structured training programs, mentorship initiatives, and multidisciplinary collaborations, the group not only strengthens clinical expertise but also ensures the continuous academic development of its members.

Establishment and Vision

The Andrology Working Group was founded with a clear mission: to bridge the existing gaps in education and research, inspire the younger generation, and provide a collaborative platform for clinicians and researchers passionate about andrology. By focusing on both male infertility and sexual health, the group aspires to lead transformative efforts in advancing andrology as a discipline. In a short period, the group has grown to include over 100 members, the majority of whom are academicians working in university hospitals across various geographical regions of the country (Figure 1) including a significant number of young specialists. Membership is open to urologists who have completed their specialty training and wish to advance their expertise in andrology. Interested professionals can apply through the SUST, which oversees the membership process. Through structured mentorship programs, the group provides guidance for early-career researchers, fostering long-term academic growth in andrology.

Activities and Initiatives

The Andrology Working Group has undertaken a range of activities to achieve its mission, including:

1. Comprehensive Andrology Training Programs: The Andrology Working Group has implemented a comprehensive training strategy combining hands-on surgical courses and virtual education to enhance the skills of urology specialists across Türkiye. Live surgical workshops provide direct experience in penile prosthesis implantation, Peyronie's disease surgeries, microsurgical varicocelectomy, microdissection testicular sperm extraction, and microsurgical vaso-vasostomy. These courses attract urologists from various regions, ensuring advanced

surgical techniques are accessible beyond major medical centers. This nationwide participation ensures andrological expertise is disseminated more evenly across Türkiye, reducing disparities in access to specialized care. In-service training programs also address specialized topics, such as sexual therapy for psychogenic erectile dysfunction.

To further expand educational reach and overcome geographical limitations, the group has developed online and semi-live courses under the "Easily Accessible, Up-to-Date, and Standardized Training Model in Urology: E-Learning Residency Training Programme". This ongoing initiative provides video-based theoretical, clinical, and surgical content on male reproductive health and sexuality. With over 1,000 participants actively engaging in its modules, the program has been associated with reported improvements in clinical knowledge and skills. Additionally, in collaboration with the International Society for Sexual Medicine (ISSM), the group has organized six expert-led online courses, covering critical topics such as Peyronie's disease treatment, penile prosthesis surgery, priapism management, urethral stricture disease, penile implant complications, and penile enlargement surgery.

2. Conferences and Symposia: Organization of national and international events to share knowledge and foster collaboration.

3. Affiliations with Institutions: Collaborations with leading academic and clinical organizations, including the ISSM, the European Society for Sexual Medicine, the European Association of Urology, Young Academic Urologists, Working Group of Sexual and Reproductive Health, and the Global Andrology Forum to promote multidisciplinary research, educational initiatives, and best clinical practices in andrology. These collaborations involve activities such as joint research projects, shared training programs, and participation in international scientific meetings.

4. Publication of Books: Contributions to national and international books on andrology and male fertility, including titles such as *Male Sexual Health and Fertility*, *Andrological Surgery Atlas*, *Treatment of Prostate Diseases and Sexuality*, and *Testosterone* (5).

5. Updates on Specific Topics: Series focused on the latest developments in key areas such as erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation.

6. Multicenter Research Studies: The Andrology Working Group has spearheaded numerous multicenter research projects, contributing to a deeper understanding of various aspects of male reproductive and sexual health (6-15). Among the numerous research projects, two particularly impactful studies stand out:



Figure 1. Geographic distribution of members as of March 2, 2025. The number of members in each region is indicated in parentheses

A survey-based study exploring the impact of different sexual positions on ejaculation was conducted, providing new insights into how positional variations may influence ejaculatory function and satisfaction. This study is one of the first to systematically examine this relationship, offering clinically relevant findings that may inform sexual therapy practices (6).

A multicenter case-control study investigates a potential relationship between blood groups and varicocele, offering a novel perspective on the genetic factors that may contribute to varicocele development. Unlike previous research, which primarily focused on environmental and anatomical factors, this study explores an overlooked genetic link, opening new avenues for further investigation (7).

7. Scholarships: Financial support for young researchers and clinicians pursuing careers in andrology. These scholarships are open to all professionals in the field and are awarded based on research potential and contribution to the field, with priority given to studies focusing on andrology education and innovation.

8. Presenting Papers at National and International Congresses: Disseminating findings and insights to the global andrology community.

9. Digital Resources via the Group's Website: The working group maintains an official website (<https://www.androlojiuud.com>), serving as a comprehensive resource hub for both clinicians and patients. The platform provides open-access materials, allowing physicians to stay updated on advancements in andrology while ensuring patients have access to reliable medical information (5). The website features educational

content, including written materials and videos on male reproductive and sexual health as well as surgical notes, consent forms, and a collection of the group's academic contributions, such as books, update series, and research publications. By consolidating academic resources and training materials, the website plays a crucial role in supporting the group's educational mission and enhancing knowledge dissemination within the andrology community.

10. In-service Training Programs as Part of Social Responsibility Projects: The Andrology Working Group has actively contributed to social responsibility initiatives by organizing educational programs aimed at promoting sexual health awareness. Importantly, these initiatives have reached a significant number of educators and healthcare professionals, ensuring the dissemination of accurate information on male reproductive and sexual health to a broader audience. Notably, training sessions were conducted in collaboration with Darüßsafaka Society, one of Türkiye's first non-governmental organizations in the field of education, which has upheld the mission of "Educational Opportunity for All" since 1863, for educators in two separate periods. These sessions focused on adolescent sexual health education as well as comprehensive instruction on the genital and reproductive systems in boys and girls. In collaboration with Darüßsafaka Society, the group has reached over 100 educators through education programs.

Subspecialized Focus Areas

The Andrology Working Group operates with six specific subspecialty groups to address the diverse needs of male reproductive and sexual health. Members have the opportunity

to join one or more of these subspecialty groups based on their interests and expertise. The six subspecialty groups are:

1. Male infertility subgroup
2. Erectile dysfunction and Peyronie's disease subgroup
3. Ejaculation disorders subgroup
4. Prostate diseases and hypogonadism subgroup
5. Female sexual health subgroup
6. LGBT+ sexual health subgroup

These subspecialty groups allow members to focus on their specific areas of interest while fostering collaboration and innovation within the broader framework of the working group.

Youth-oriented Approach

A key characteristic of the Andrology Working Group is its predominantly young membership. With most members in the early stages of their careers, the group benefits from their enthusiasm, innovation, and forward-thinking perspectives. This dynamic energy allows the group to address longstanding challenges with fresh approaches while fostering the next generation of andrology leaders. At the same time, the group acknowledges the crucial role of experienced mentors in guiding young professionals. Through structured mentorship programs and collaborations with senior experts, a program facilitates the transfer of knowledge and expertise across generations, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Academic Impact

The group has made substantial contributions to the academic landscape by publishing articles in high-impact journals and organizing events that address critical topics in male reproductive and sexual health. By creating opportunities for young professionals to engage in research and clinical practice, the group is not only addressing current needs but also ensuring sustainable growth in andrology.

Conclusion

The Andrology Working Group of the Society of Urological Surgery serves as a model for innovation and collaboration in addressing educational and academic gaps in andrology. By fostering the integration of young professionals with experienced mentors, the group ensures both continuous advancement and long-term sustainability in the field. Through its diverse initiatives, the group contributes to the development of andrology and encourages similar efforts at both national and international levels.

Footnotes

Authorship Contributions

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