



1. Introduction

- Hard flaccid (HF) syndrome is a symptom complex that significantly impacts a man’s sexual and social life.
- HF syndrome is not formally recognized as a real medical condition, with only one published case series currently available.
- We aimed to conduct a qualitative, internet forum analysis of HF reports.

2. Methods

- “Hard flaccid; forum” was searched on Google®
- 12 forum discussions and 6,150 comments from September to November 2018 were thematically analyzed.
- Results were independently reviewed by two researchers and transcribed for details regarding etiology, diagnosis, symptoms, and/or management.
- Inter-rater reliability and validity were assessed and a conceptual framework was created.

3a. Results

- Discussion threads were most often initiated by a man seeking information and advice on HF or symptoms related to HF.
- The thread with the most responses had 3,926 replies among 393 pages.
- Overall, men initiating discussion threads appeared to have several unanswered questions regarding symptoms suggestive of HF.

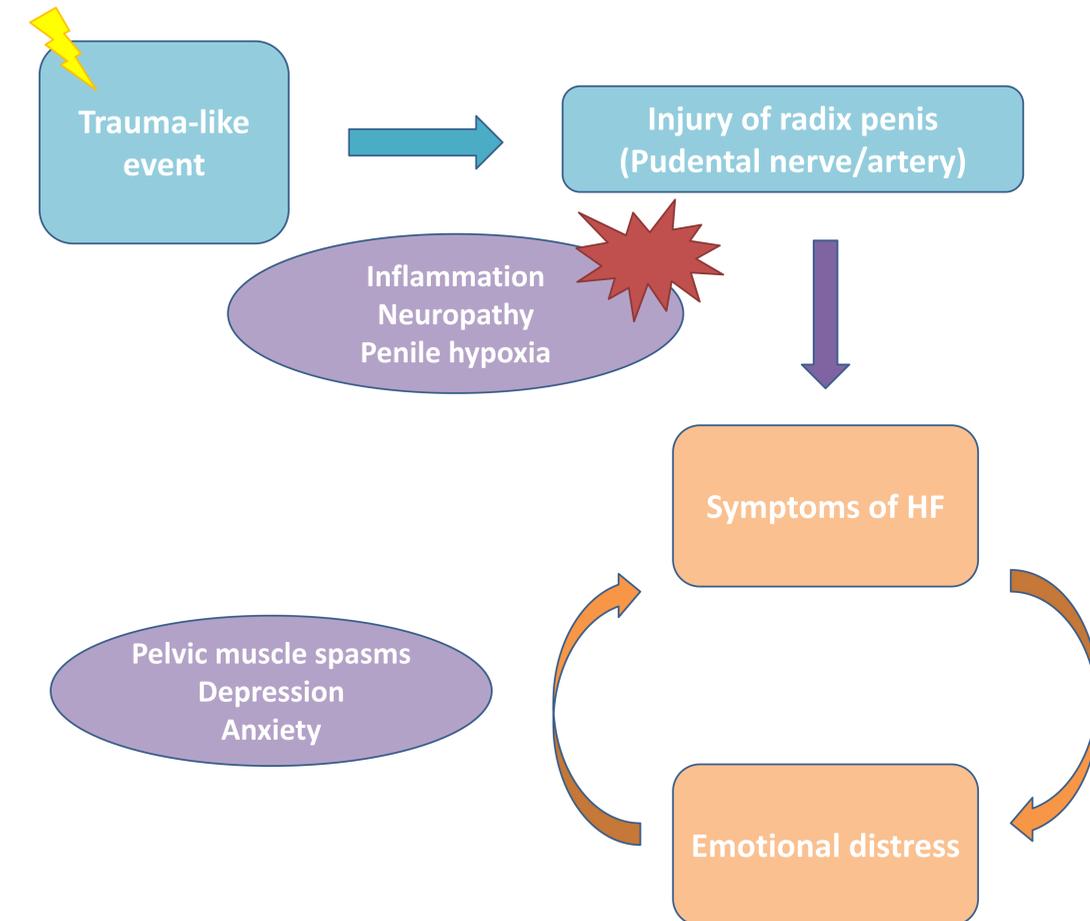
3b. Results

- Four themes arose:
 - “I would like to ensure that I have HF”
 - “How did I end up like this?”
 - “Seeking support for treatment choices – who will help me?”
 - “How can I cope with this condition?”

Table 1. Symptoms of Hard Flaccid Syndrome

Penis
Feels constantly hard but in flaccid state
During masturbation, slight ache in the base of the penis
No morning erections
Painful ejaculation
Erections often feel hollow or empty but also more rigid than usual
Noticeable superficial veins
Glans is often soft, sometimes cold or numb
Difficult to maintain erections
Erections best when lying on back, worst when standing up
Low libido
Painful urination and very rarely a weak stream
Occasional penile and/or perineal pain
Tests
Normal physical examinations, sometimes mild curvature
Generally normal hormone levels and other blood tests
Normal penile Doppler ultrasound
Normal MRI and other imaging modalities

Figure 1. Vicious Cycle of Hard Flaccid Syndrome



4. Conclusions

- Although HF is not recognized by major medical authorities, many men appear to suffer from symptoms related to HF syndrome.
- Future basic science and clinical studies must be conducted to understand the exact pathophysiology of HF syndrome and to develop effective therapies.