European Association of Urology Guidelines on Penile Size Abnormalities and Dysmorphophobia: Summary of the 2023 Guidelines

Marco Falcone a,*, Carlo Bettocchi b, Joana Carvalho c, Miguel Ricou d, Luca Boeri e, Paolo Capogrosso f, Andrea Cocci g, Giovanni Corona h, Murat Gül i, Georgios Hatzichristodoulou j, T. Hugh Jones k, Ates Kadioglu l, Arif Kalkanli m, Juan I. Martinez-Salamanca n, Uros Milenkovic o, L. Afonso Morgado p,q, Giorgio I. Russo r, Ege Can Serefoglu s, Tharu Tharakan t, Paolo Verze u, Suk s Minhas t, y, Andrea Salonia v,w, y

a Department of Urology, Molinette Hospital, A.O.U. Città della Salute e della Scienza, University of Turin, Turin, Italy; b Department of Andrology and Male Genitalia Reconstructive Surgery, University of Foggia, Foggia, Italy; c William James Center for Research, Department of Education and Psychology, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal; d Department of Community Medicine, Information and Health Decision Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal; e Department of Urology, IRCCS Fondazione Ca Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy; f Department of Urology and Andrology, Ospedale di Circolo and Macchi Foundation, Varese, Italy; g Department of Minimally Invasive and Robotic Urologic Surgery and Kidney Transplantation, University of Florence, Florence, Italy; h Endocrinology Unit, Medical Department, Maggiore-Bellaria Hospital, Bologna, Italy; i Department of Urology, School of Medicine, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey; j Department of Urology, Martha-Maria Hospital Nuremberg, Nuremberg, Germany; k Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology, Barnsley Hospital NHS Trust, Barnsley, UK; l Department of Urology, Istanbul University School of Medicine, Istanbul, Turkey; m Department of Urology, Taksim Education and Research Hospital, Istanbul, Turkey; n Department of Urology, Hospital Universitario Puerta del Hierro Majadahonda, Madrid, Spain; o Department of Urology, University Hospitals Leuven, Leuven, Belgium; p Urology Service, Centro Hospitalar Universitário São João, Porto, Portugal; q Department of Biomedicine, Faculty of Medicine, Porto University, Porto, Portugal; r Urology Section, Department of Surgery, University of Catania, Catania, Italy; s Department of Urology, Biruni University School of Medicine, Istanbul, Turkey; t Department of Urology, Charing Cross Hospital, Imperial Healthcare NHS Trust, London, UK; u Department of Medicine and Surgery, Scuola Medica Salernitana, University of Salerno, Fisciano, Italy; v Division of Experimental Oncology/Unit of Urology, Urological Research Institute, IRCCS Ospedale San Raffaele, Milan, Italy; w Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan, Italy

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Abstract

Context: Recommendations regarding the management of penile size abnormalities and dysmorphophobia are important in guiding evidence-based clinical practice.

Objective: To present a summary of the 2023 European Association of Urology sexual and reproductive health evidence-based recommendations for the management of penile size abnormalities and dysmorphophobia.

Evidence acquisition: A broad and comprehensive scoping exercise covering all areas of the guidelines was performed. Databases searched included Medline, EMBASE, and the Cochrane Libraries. A level of evidence and a strength of recommendation were assigned for each recommendation according to the evidence identified. The evidence cutoff date for the 2023 guidelines is June 1, 2022.

Evidence synthesis: Well-structured studies reporting high level of evidence, with standardized PROMS were deficient on penile size abnormalities and dysmorphophobia. A shared definition for short penis/micropenis was also lacking. Categorisation of penile
abnormalities according to congenital, acquired, and dysmorphophobic aetiology is deemed compulsory. A detailed medical and psychosexual history and precise measurements of penile size are essential in the diagnostic pathway. Patients with normal penile size who are seeking penile augmentation should be referred for psychological evaluation for potential dysmorphophobic disorders. Penile length and girth enhancements can be achieved via a multitude of treatments, but a personalised management plan is crucial for satisfactory results. Endocrinological therapies, when indicated, are effective in the prepubertal setting only. Vacuum therapy has a limited evidence base in treatment protocols, although acceptable outcomes have been reported for penile traction therapy. Surgical techniques to enhance penile length and girth have limited evidence and should only be proposed after extensive patient counselling.

Conclusions: Management of penile abnormalities and dysmorphobia is a complex issue with considerable ethical concerns. The adoption of a structured diagnostic and therapeutic pathway is crucial, as recommended in the guidelines.

Patient summary: Requests for medical/surgical treatments to increase penis size have increased dramatically worldwide. Several conservative and surgical treatments are available. However, few patients receive clear information on the benefits and possible harms of these treatments. These guidelines aim to provide a structured path to guide both physicians and patients in the selection of appropriate treatment(s) to increase penis size.

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and radical cystectomy, represent the most common aetiologies for prostate cancer, particularly radical prostatectomy causing penile shortening, Peyronie's disease (PD), treatment involving the corpora cavernosa [27–32]. Among chronic causes of penile shortening, Peyronie's disease (PD), treatment for prostate cancer, particularly radical prostatectomy and radical cystectomy, represent the most common aetiologies [27,33–39].

2.4. Body dysmorphic disorder

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is a clinical diagnosis defined by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) [40] as the strong distress generated by perceived defect(s) or flaw(s) in an individual's physical appearance. This flaw is not observable to others, or, if it exists, it appears only slightly [40]. This condition results in significant impairment in important areas of an individual's social or occupational life. BDD is included among the obsessive compulsive and related disorders [40]. Men with BDD present with an exaggerated focus on the size or shape of their penis. BDD is conceptually different from small penis anxiety (SPA), which refers to excessive anxiety regarding a normal-sized penis. SPA is not included under the APA nomenclature, but men with SPA may be at risk of BDD [41]. All of these definitions exclude men with true micro-penis [40,42].

3. Diagnosis

3.1. Medical and sexual history

The first step in evaluation of short penis is a detailed medical history [43]. Common causes of penile shortness should be evaluated (eg, history of phimosis, priapism, lichen sclerosis/epispadias, penile trauma, penile cancer, prostate cancer, penile pain with or without acquired penile curvature suggestive of PD).

3.2. Physical examination and penile size measurements

A focused physical examination of the genital area is essential. Assessment of penile size and shape is mandatory to plan any subsequent psychological, medical, or surgical treatment. The methods for penile measurement vary among surgeons, but the EAU Guidelines Panel on Sexual and Reproductive Health considers SPL measurement to be the minimum requirement [9,44]. The guideline also recommends additional measurements in both the flaccid and erect state, if possible. SPL can be measured both dorsally and/or ventrally from the penopubic skin junction to the glans tip, or dorsally from the pubic bone to the glans tip using either a measuring tape or Vernier callipers [45]. For girth, both coronal and mid-shaft measurements should be recorded [46].

3.3. Psychological assessment

A subgroup of men requesting penile augmentation procedures present with psychological vulnerability, including BDD [41]. A set of freely available self-reported tools can be used to screen patients at risk of psychopathology or poorer surgical outcomes, including the Body Dysmorphic Disorder Questionnaire [41]; the Cosmetic Procedure Screening Scale for Penile Dysmorphic Disorder [47]; and the Male Genital Self-Image Scale [48,49]. BDD and other psychopathological comorbidities should be assessed by an accredited mental health specialist.

3.4. Counselling and outcomes assessment

A number of validated questionnaires focusing on sexual and erectile function are available. While not specifically validated for the short penis setting, they may be helpful in assessing baseline sexual function and beliefs about penile size [50–58] (Tables 2 and 3).

3.5. Imaging

There is limited evidence regarding the use of imaging techniques in the assessment of patients complaining of penile size abnormalities. Although penile ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging may provide additional data regarding penile anatomy, there is no definitive evidence that the additional data obtained via imaging provide extra information above a physical examination to justify routine use in this clinical scenario [9,59,60].

4. Nonsurgical treatment of penile shortness

4.1. Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is recommended when psychopathological comorbidities are detected or when aversive relationship dynamics may be an underlying factor (Table 4). Addressing patients' and partners' motivations and expectations regarding penile augmentation is a key psychotherapeutic target. Men with BDD express a discrepancy between the perceived and the ideal size of the penis, internalising the belief they should have a larger penis [61]. Psychotherapy should attempt to normalise the concept of variability in genital shape and size [8].

4.2. Penile traction therapy

The evidence for use of penile traction therapy is summarised in Supplementary Table 1 [62–66]. Overall, penile traction therapy seems to be effective in lengthening the penis in both the flaccid (+1.7–2.3 cm) and stretched (+1.3–1.7 cm) state with minimal side effects. It is not effective for penile girth enhancement. The quality of

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### Table 1 – Recommendations for the definition and classification of penile abnormalities and dysmorphophobia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Strength rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A detailed genital examination should be considered in all men and particularly in men with BMI &gt;30 kg/m², a history of lichen sclerosis or penile cancer, or complaints of urinary/sexual difficulties or poor cosmesis to exclude the presence of AABP.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use classification systems to categorise AABP clinical presentation and surgical management.</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquire regarding the presence of body dysmorphic disorder/penile dysmorphic disorder in patients with a normal-sized penis complaining of short penis size.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- AABP = adult acquired buried penis.
- SPL = suprapubic length.
evidence is low owing to the lack of randomised controlled trials.

4.3. Vacuum erection devices

Data on the use of vacuum erection devices for penile elongation are scarce. In one study of 27 men whose SPL was <10 cm, use of a vacuum erection device for 6 mo did not result in a significant increase in SPL or flaccid length [67].

4.4. Endocrinological therapies

Hormonal administration (testosterone, human chorionic gonadotropin, follicle-stimulating hormone) has been used to increase the length of the penis in infant or prepubertal boys with micropenis, with satisfactory effects on penile development [68–70]. No evidence supports the use of hormonal therapies after puberty.

5. Surgical treatment of penile shortness

5.1. Surgical treatment of AABP

The purpose of any surgical approach is to unbury the penile shaft, potentially remove perigenital or excess abdominal tissue, and reconstruct the penis to reduce the risk of recurrence of burying. The goal is to balance an effective surgical procedure aimed at improving patient QoL against minimisation of postoperative complications. Lifestyle changes and modification of risk factors, particularly weight loss, are widely considered as a proactive approach to minimise AABP surgical complications and should be encouraged before any surgical intervention (Table 5). The outcomes of surgical interventions to manage AABP are summarised in Supplementary Table 2. Variable incidence of recurrence (5.2–75%) and satisfactory functional outcomes have been reported, with significant incidence of postoperative complications (3.5% Clavien-Dindo grade V) [71].

5.2. Surgical treatment of congenital intrinsic penile shortness

5.2.1. Suspensory ligament release

Suspensory ligament release involves an infrapubic surgical incision and release of the ligament which attaches the penis to the pubic bone [72–74]. A combined elongating V-Y skin plasty can also be considered [73]. Outcomes for suspensory ligament release are summarised in Supplementary Table 3. Overall, variable increases in SPL have been reported (1.1–4.3 cm) [56,72–74].

5.2.2. Ventral phalloplasty/scrotoplasty

This intervention is based on a ventral shaft skin plasty to move the penoscrotal angle proximally and increase exposure of the penile shaft [75–77]. The surgical outcomes are summarised in Supplementary Table 3.

5.2.3. Suprapubic lipectomy/liposuction/lipectomy

This intervention reduced the size of the suprapubic fat pad either via a minimally invasive approach (liposuction) or surgically (lipectomy). The aim of removing the suprapubic fat pad is to increase penile shaft exposure [78,79].

5.2.4. Total phallic reconstruction

Total phallic reconstruction (TPR) is the most complex genital reconstruction. The aim is to create a new phallus with a neourethra, and this technique is reserved for severe penile
Table 5 – Recommendations for surgical treatment of short penile size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Strength rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult acquired buried penis</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensively counsel patients on the benefits and complications of AABP surgery.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate lifestyle changes and modification of risk factors, particularly weight loss, to minimise AABP surgical complications and to optimise surgical outcomes.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider surgical treatment to address AABP.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congenital intrinsic penile shortness</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform penile augmentation surgery in high-volume centres.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use suspensory ligament release, ventral phalloplasty, and suprapubic lipoplasty/liposuction/lipectomy to address penile lengthening.</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensively discuss possible complications related to suspensory ligament release, ventral phalloplasty, and suprapubic lipoplasty/liposuction/lipectomy.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use total phallic reconstruction to restore genital anatomy in patients affected by congenital micropenis.</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquired penile shortness</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not recommend penile prosthesis implantation, penile disassembly, or sliding techniques to patients seeking penile lengthening options.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use total phallic reconstruction to restore genital anatomy in genetic males with penile inadequacy due to traumatic loss.</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AABP = adult acquired buried penis.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5.3. Surgical treatment of acquired penile shortness

5.3.1. Penile prosthesis implantation

The literature fails to show a direct relationship between penile prosthesis implantation (PPI) and penile length in men with erectile dysfunction and no concomitant PD. Deveci et al. [81] evaluated SPL in men undergoing primary implant surgery for diabetes or radical prostatectomy. Some 72% of the patients reported a subjective decrease in penile length, although there was no statistically significant difference in measured SPL [81]. In another study, 45 patients with PD with no deformity, penile curvature <30°, or severe penile fibrosis/scarring received an AMS 700 LGX implant [82]. The mean SPL improved from 13.1 ± 1.2 cm to 13.7 ± 1.1 cm at 6 mo and 14.2 ± 1.2 cm at 12 mo [82]. In a prospective study in which patients with PD were excluded, erect penile length was compared at baseline (erection achieved via intracavernosal injection) and after PPI inflation. The authors observed a decrease in erect penile length of 0.83 ± 0.25 cm at 6 wk, 0.75 ± 0.20 cm at 6 mo, and 0.74 ± 0.15 cm at 1 yr [83]. A further study in which patients with PD were excluded confirmed these results, as the median preoperative pharmacologically induced length of 14.2 cm decreased to a median postprosthesis penile length of 13.5 ± 2.13 cm [84].

5.3.2. Penile disassembly

This technique consists of separation of the penis into its anatomic components and insertion of autologous cartilage into the space created between the glans cap and the tip of corpora cavernosa. Perovic and Djordjevic [85] reported an increase of 3 cm in SPL and 3.1 cm in erect length among 19 patients. Results for this procedure are poorly documented, and significant complications such as glans necrosis have led to controversy regarding its value as a surgical option.

5.3.3. Corporal-lengthening manoeuvres

Penile length restoration via the sliding technique (ST) and concomitant PPI was first described in a small series of three patients with end-stage PD associated with severe shortening, and was further supported by a larger series of 28 patients in a multicentre study [86,87]. Overall, 95% of men were satisfied with their increase in penile length (average 3.2 cm). The modified ST (MoST) and multiple slit technique (MuST) are modifications of the original ST [88,89]. In a series reported by Egydio and Kuehhas [88], 143 patients with penile shortening and narrowing underwent a MoST or MuST procedure. The mean gain in penile length was 3.1 cm. The tunical expansion procedure was performed in 416 patients and yielded an average gain in penile length of 3.3 cm (range 2–6) [89]. Outcomes for these procedures are limited and their utility in clinical practice is questionable owing to severe complications.

5.3.4. Total phallic reconstruction

A radial-artery forearm free flap (RAFFF) is the reconstructive approach most often used for TPR. Falcione et al [29] reported their single-centre experience with ten patients who underwent TPR using RAFFF after traumatic penile loss. The outcomes are summarised in Supplementary Table 4.

6. Penile girth enhancement

In recent years, men have increasingly approached urologists for penile girth enhancement to increase their self-confidence, for cosmesis, or to satisfy their partners [90]. Although request for these surgical techniques have become more frequent, the level of evidence for their use in clinical practice is low, notwithstanding the ethical considerations for surgery in this vulnerable group of patients (Table 6).

6.1. Injection therapy for penile girth enhancement

6.1.1. Soft tissue fillers

Hyaluronic acid (HA) gel is one of the injectable fillers most commonly used in the field of plastic surgery [43,91]. Application of HA for penile girth enhancement has increased in popularity owing to its biocompatibility and infrequent...
mild and temporary side effects. The newly invented cross-linked HA has a more lasting effect over time [92]. Studies on HA injection for penile girth enhancement have reported an increase of 1.4–3.78 cm in penile girth (Supplementary Table 5). Patient satisfaction is high (78–100%) and no severe side effects have been reported [93–97].

Polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA) microspheres have been injected as a wrinkle filler, and an average increase in penile circumference of 3.5 cm was reported in two studies [98,99]. Reported side effects included postoperative swelling and inflammatory reactions, which resolved within a few days. No migration of PMMA microspheres to neighbouring regions was observed.

Poly-L-lactic acid is another widely used soft tissue filler. It exerts enhanced effects by stimulating fibroblast proliferation and increasing collagen deposition in tissues. An average increase of 1.2–2.4 cm in penile girth has been reported. No complications other than temporary local pain and swelling were reported [94,100].

6.1.2. Other fillers

Foreign body injection is still frequently practiced in many countries, either by the patient himself or by health care workers, using various substances such as paraffin, silicone, or petroleum jelly (Vaseline) to increase the circumference of the penis [101]. This induces a chronic granulomatous inflammatory foreign-body reaction [101]. The result of this practice is a pathological condition called sclerosing lipogranuloma of the penis, also referred to as paraffinoma or siliconoma according to the substance used [101]. The resultant inflammatory process ranges from oedema and inflammatory reactions, which resolved within a few days. No migration of PMMA microspheres to neighbouring regions was observed.

When exploring the ethics of undertaking these procedures, there are a number of medical decision-making principles to consider [114], including personal, clinical, and social factors. In the context of penile augmentation, the personal dimensions are central and complex. On one hand, men with micropenis and functional difficulties should be able to benefit from surgical intervention. On the other hand, men with BDD must be referred for psychological and/or psychiatric interventions, which are the first-line therapies for this disorder. Social issues are complex and multifaceted, but must be considered to prevent unwarranted suffering for patients. However, the central question is whether, in the context of limited health resources and societal pressure, prioritisation of such surgery is deemed appropriate. Finally, the issue of professional responsibility—the responsibility of doctors to reinforce public confidence in the medical profession and to promote the best interests of the patient—must be considered. While interventions may reinforce a patient’s trust in the medical profession and to promote the best interests of the patient, particularly the psychological interests of the patient—must be considered. While interventions may reinforce a patient’s trust in the medical profession and to promote the best interests of the patient, particularly the psychological interests of the patient—must be considered. While interventions may reinforce a patient’s trust in the medical profession and to promote the best interests of the patient, particularly the psychological interests of the patient—must be considered. While interventions may reinforce a patient’s trust in the medical profession and to promote the best interests of the patient, particularly the psychological

6.2. Surgical treatment for penile girth enhancement

6.2.1. Autologous fat injection

This is a surgical technique based on thinning the lower abdomen with liposuction and injecting the harvested fat tissue into the penile shaft [105–107]. In retrospective studies, an average increase of 2–3.5 cm in penile circumference was reported (Supplementary Table 6). No statistically significant decrease was observed in International Index of Erectile Function scores and no serious adverse events were reported; a postoperative survey revealed that >75% of patients were satisfied [74,105,108].

6.2.2. Grafting procedures (albugineal and pericavernosal)

Surgical techniques using grafts for penile girth enhancement are controversial. For girth gains of 0–4.9 cm, the incidence of postoperative complications was up to 44.4% (Supplementary Table 6). Until more rigorous multi-institutional studies reporting on complications and validated outcomes are conducted, grafting procedures for penile girth enhancement should be considered experimental.

6.2.3. Biodegradable scaffolds

In this technique, fibroblasts harvested from the patient’s own scrotal skin and Dartos tissue are cultured and seeded into microporous biodegradable poly-lactic-co-glycolic acid scaffolds, which are then implanted between the Dartos fascia and Buck’s fascia. A limited number of studies have reported a girth gain of up to 4.02 cm [109–111] (Supplementary Table 8).

6.2.4. Subcutaneous penile implants

A silicone penile implant called Penuma (International Medical Devices, Beverly Hills, CA, USA) has recently received US Food and Drug Administration approval and has shown promising results for penile girth enhancement. Penuma is a soft silicone subcutaneous implant that is placed on three-quarters of the penile shaft and fixed to the glans with a polyester mesh [112]. Studies have reported an average increase in penile circumference of 2–5 cm. According to published data, complication rates (usually mild and transient) occur in <5% of cases and the removal rate (1%) for the implant is low [112,113].

7. Ethics

When exploring the ethics of undertaking these procedures, there are a number of medical decision-making principles to consider [114], including personal, clinical, and social factors. In the context of penile augmentation, the personal dimensions are central and complex. On one hand, men with micropenis and functional difficulties should be able to benefit from surgical intervention. On the other hand, men with BDD must be referred for psychological and/or psychiatric interventions, which are the first-line therapies for this disorder. Social issues are complex and multifaceted, but must be considered to prevent unwarranted suffering for patients. However, the central question is whether, in the context of limited health resources and societal pressure, prioritisation of such surgery is deemed appropriate. Finally, the issue of professional responsibility—the responsibility of doctors to reinforce public confidence in the medical profession and to promote the best interests of the patient—must be considered. While interventions may reinforce a patient’s trust in the medical profession, we are dealing with a group of highly vulnerable individuals. Therefore, exploration of the various dimensions of a patient’s health, particularly the psychological

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6 – Recommendations for management of penile girth enhancement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel patients extensively regarding the risks and benefits of penile girth enhancement techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not use silicone, paraffin, or petroleum jelly (Vaseline) to address penile girth enhancement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyaluronic acid, soft tissue fillers, and autologous fat injection can be used to address penile girth enhancement but should not be considered as treatment modalities in men with penile dysmorphic disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the use of penile girth enhancement procedures using grafts as experimental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider the use of biodegradable scaffolds and subcutaneous penile implants (Penuma) to address penile girth enhancement as experimental.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
dimensions, may be much more reinforcing of this trust than simply complying with the patient’s requests and providing a surgical intervention with a limited evidence base. Given the current scenario, clinicians should adopt a multidisciplinary team approach and provide a treatment-based approach that is sensitive to patient needs, while maintaining ethical standards without compromising mental health. Open doctor-patient communication regarding expectations, specific risks, benefits, and alternatives is paramount in facilitating the best possible results in this complicated field.

8. Conclusions

Management of penile abnormalities and dysmorphophobia is a complex issue with numerous ethical implications. The adoption of a structured diagnostic and therapeutic pathway within a multidisciplinary team approach, as recommended by the EAU guidelines, is crucial (Fig. 1). The current EAU guidelines provide the first set of comprehensive evidence-based recommendations on this topic; however, it should be noted that the majority of recommendations reply on low- to very low-level evidence.

Author contributions: Marco Falcone had full access to all the data in the study and takes responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis.

Study concept and design: Falcone, Bettocchi, Carvalho, Ricou, Minhas, Salonia.

Acquisition of data: Falcone, Bettocchi, Carvalho, Ricou.

Analysis and interpretation of data: Falcone, Bettocchi, Carvalho, Ricou, Minhas, Salonia.

Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: Boeri, Capogrosso, Cocci, Corona, Gül, Hatzichristodoulou, Jones, Kadioglu, Kalkanli, Martinez-Salamanca, Milenkovic, Morgado, Russo, Serefoglu, Tharakan, Verze.

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Fig. 1 – Diagnostic and treatment algorithm for the management of short penile size. The strength of recommendation is shown in parentheses where appropriate. AABP = adult acquired buried penis; BAPS = Belief About Penis Size; BDD = body dysmorphic disorder; ED = erectile dysfunction; PE = premature ejaculation. *Penile length should be measured stretched both from the penopubic skin junction to the glans tip, and from the pubic bone to the glans tip. #There is lack of evidence to recommend one treatment over another. **Hyaluronic acid (HA), poly-L-lactic acid (PLA), hydroxyethylmethacrylate, polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), polyalkylamide hydrogel, and calcium hydroxyapatite are considered as injectable materials for penile girth enhancement. Although the level of evidence is low, there is more evidence for HA, PLA, and PMMA. Do not use silicone, paraffin or Vaseline (strong evidence against).
Supervision: Minhas, Salonia.
Other: None.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euf.2023.08.012.

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