

By SRI TAYLOR

CONNOR Speed never imagined he would be asking for a vasectomy at the age of 23, but after the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, he decided to take the plunge.

He's frustrated by what he sees as a loss of rights for the women in his life; he also wants to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

"Unfortunately my fiancée and my daughter now don't have the right to choose what they want to do with their body, and I do, so I made this choice," said Speed, who scheduled the procedure in his home state of Missouri five days after the ruling.

By the time he undergoes the planned procedure in October, he'll have turned 24.

The high court's reversal of the 1973 landmark decision protecting the federal right to abortion has sent shock waves through the medical, legal and advocacy communities.

Under pressure to respond, the White House said President Joe Biden signed an executive order last week intended to preserve access to the procedure.

Meanwhile, couples have been forced to reconsider how they'll safeguard against unwanted pregnancies.

Speed is among hundreds of men rushing to book sterilisation procedures after the June 24 ruling.

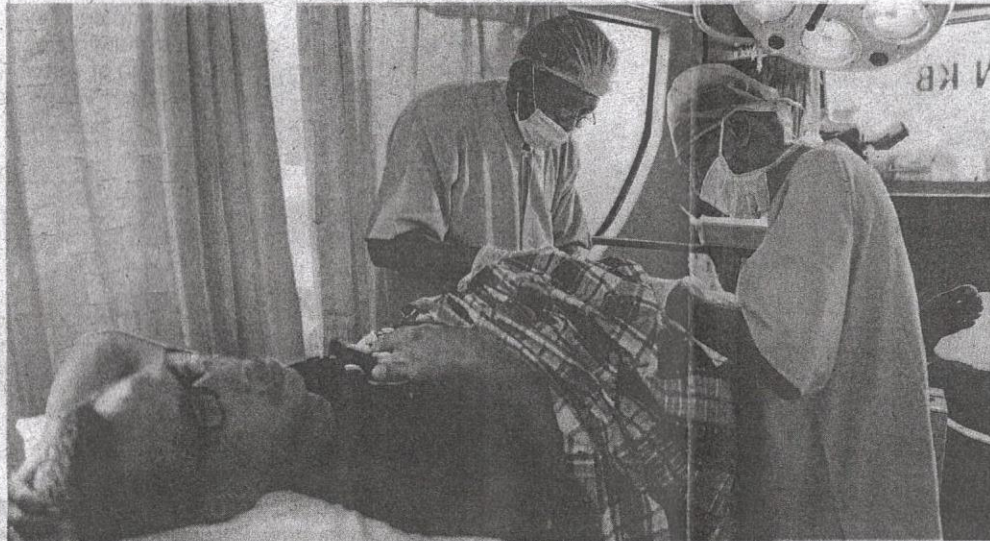
In Ohio, where abortions are now prohibited after six weeks into pregnancy, the Cleveland Clinic went from lining up three or four vasectomies a day to 90.

Des Moines, Iowa, urologist Esgar Guarín said he typically performs 40 to 50 vasectomies a month; last weekend alone 20 men registered.

Koushik Shaw of the Austin Urology Institute in Texas said his office received about 70 calls within an hour of the ruling.

Men rush to get snipped

Here's why men in their early 20s are choosing vasectomies in post-Roe United States.



Unlike tubal ligation, which is performed in women, vasectomies are reversible and success rates range from 30% to 90%. — AFP



access to sexual and reproductive health care — including, but not limited to, abortion," said Diana Contreras, Planned Parenthood's chief health care officer.

Male birth control

In a vasectomy, doctors sever the tubes that carry sperm, preventing it from mixing with semen.

Dependence on it is not uncommon: In a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey published in 2020, 5.6% of women cited vasectomy as their contraceptive approach, compared with 14% using birth control pills.

While vasectomies are often reversible, success rates range

Medicine urologist.

In contrast, research published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1992 found that, among men who were cancer-free at the start of the study, vasectomy "was associated with reductions in mortality from all causes."

Goldstein said he's seen an unusual increase among vasectomies in men who are younger and in childless couples since the ruling.

That may also reflect a link between vasectomies and financial dread that's been noted in periods such as the Great Recession of 2007-2009, when procedures spiked while reversals dropped, he said.

US consumer confidence has fallen to its lowest point since July 2020, according to the Ipsos-Forbes Advisor US Consumer Confidence Tracker.

"Whenever we see a downturn in the economy, more people think about having less children," said Philip Werthman, a urologist at the Center for Male Reproductive Medicine & Vasectomy Reversal in Los Angeles.

Whether those trends last remains to be seen.

"My initial response is that part of this is reactionary," said Stein, the Tampa urologist.

Future legislation and court activity will likely play an important role, he said.

While contraception itself is currently unaffected by the court's June decision, Justice Clarence Thomas suggested the group reconsider that issue, among many other rights-based questions.

Many men who had been considering a vasectomy say the verdict was the last straw, according to Tampa, Florida, urologist Doug Stein.

Weekly requests for the procedure at his practice have nearly tripled to about 150.

"They want to remain pregnancy-free, because now you cannot

Abortion-rights supporters rally last month in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, US. — TNS

reverse a pregnancy as easily as you could before," he said.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, which provides vasectomies in some of its clinics, said web traffic on a page explaining how to receive a sterilisation pro-

cedure increased over 2,200% in the days following the judgement.

Traffic to an article on how to get a vasectomy spiked more than 1,500%.

"Many people are rightfully concerned about their rights and

from 30% to 90%.

Most women's tubal ligation procedures, another surgical form of pregnancy prevention, can't be reversed and are far more dangerous than male sterilisation.

"Every single year in this country alone, 25 to 30 women die from getting their tubes tied," said Marc Goldstein, a Weill Cornell

As those uncertainties mount, Speed said his choice to get a vasectomy has eased a lot of his anxieties about family planning.

"I don't regret my decision," he said.

"I am eager for it, I'm excited, and hopefully it's not just a decision made in vain." — Bloomberg News/TNS

Understanding male sexual problems

By Dr CHESTER LAN

SEXUAL conditions in general can be an embarrassing topic for men to discuss.

However, some sexual problems are more common than others and can be alleviated, as we will discuss in this article.

Erectile dysfunction

Erectile dysfunction (aka impotence) is the inability to get and keep an erection firm enough for sexual intercourse.

Having issues maintaining an erection from time to time isn't necessarily a cause for concern, but it may warrant medical attention if the issue is much more frequent.

Studies indicate that up to 20% of sexually active men suffer from some degree of erectile dysfunction, and the prevalence of the condition increases with age.

It is found that up to 86% of men aged 80 years and above are unable to achieve a satisfactory erection.

There are numerous reasons as to why this condition can persist.

Contributing factors include:

> Diabetes

- > Hypertension
- > Smoking
- > Performance anxiety
- > Stress, and
- > Low testosterone.

During your consultation, your doctor will examine these risk factors in your history and advise treatment accordingly.

For example, certain conditions can be treated with medication that eases blood flow to the penis to encourage a stronger erection.

Or, if the problems are more serious, it will be treated through other medications or even lifestyle changes.

Premature ejaculation (PE)

Amongst others, PE is the most common sexual problem affecting men, with studies indicating that one in three men may be affected by it.

Usually, PE stems from psychological issues and not physical ones.

Some of these issues include:

- > Anxiety
- > Poor body image
- > Sexual naivety
- > Relationship issues, and
- > Depression.

However, there may be some cases where it stems from physiological causes such as abnormal hormone levels or inflammation or infection of the prostate or urethra.

PE is usually treated with a combination of as-per-needed medication which is either oral or topical.

Patients can also undergo body and mental training to avoid such issues as well as behavioural changes to prevent this condition from occurring.

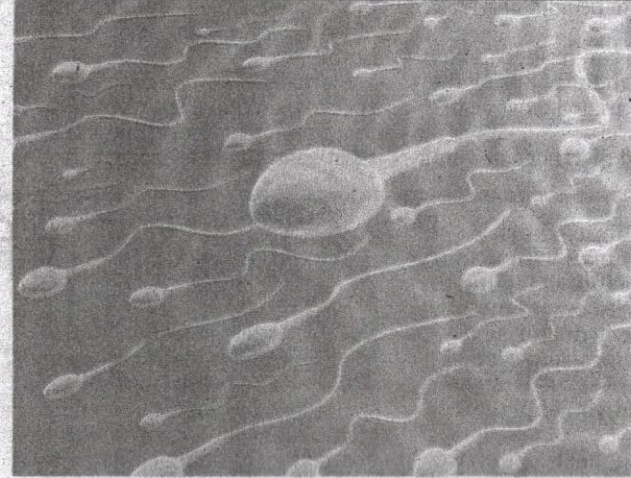
Low libido

Low libido, or decreased sex drive, is a condition that can be derived from psychological issues such as depression or anxiety, or medical issues such as hormone issues or low testosterone levels, potentially leading to unsatisfied partners or a reduction in one's self-confidence.

Your doctor will usually go through your history to investigate if there are any contributing factors.

For a clearer image, blood tests may also be taken to examine hormone levels.

Low hormone levels can potentially present not just with a lower than usual level of libido, but also



Premature ejaculation is a type of sexual dysfunction that occurs when a man releases (ejaculates) semen sooner than he or his partner would like. — AFP

erectile dysfunction, loss of morning erections, weight gain, poor concentration or mood swings.

In order to effectively treat low libido, the root cause must be addressed to determine if it's psychological or physiological.

Testosterone replacement therapy may be advised if an individual has hormonal issues.

Otherwise, lifestyle changes and encouraging a healthy mind and body connection may also be effective.

Though these conditions can be embarrassing for some people, they are highly treatable, and the first step to mitigate this is to open up and discuss with your doctor.

Dr Chester Lan is a Singapore-based general practitioner. For more information, email starhealth@thestar.com.my. The information provided is for educational and communication purposes only and it should not be construed as personal medical advice. Information published in this article is not intended to replace, supplant or augment a consultation with a health professional regarding the reader's own medical care. *The Star* disclaims all responsibility for any losses, damage to property or personal injury suffered directly or indirectly from reliance on such information.