Table 2

Testosterone replacement therapy: contraindications and side effects

Contraindications

- Breast cancer
- Severe chronic heart failure
- Raised haematocrit
- Locally advanced or metastatic prostate cancer receiving active treatment
- Planning to father children

Potential side effects

- Skin irritation - a common problem with patch transdermal preparations[21,22]
- Raised haematocrit and erythrocytosis - common when using injectable preparations of testosterone but less so with transdermal preparations[23]
- Fluid retention
- Hepatotoxicity with oral agents[24,25]
- Gynaecomastia
- Testicular atrophy and infertility as a result of reduced intratesticular testosterone levels[7]
- Adverse cardiovascular events – supported by anecdotal evidence; recent research indicates that testosterone may in fact be cardioprotective[25,26]
- Benign prostatic hyperplasia
- Prostate cancer - this is a theoretical risk supported by little evidence[27]
- Alteration in mood such as anger and aggression
- Skin changes such as acne and oily skin