

Younger men's experience of prostate cancer: Impact on mental health and daily lives

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Background & aim of study

- Prostate cancer (PC) is the most common male cancer in Ireland – (1 in 7 Irish men) (Irish Cancer Society, 1999-2017).
- An increased up-take in PSA Screening has led to an increased detection of PC in younger men in Ireland.
- A review of the literature reveals that the most common forms of psychological distress experienced by men with prostate cancer are anxiety and depression, which frequently coexist (Roth et al., 1998; Balderson and Towell, 2003, Sharpley et al., 2014; Sharp et al., 2015).
- Limited research is available on the impact of PC on younger men's identity, masculinity, information and support needs, and influence on daily lives during treatment and survivorship.
- AIM: To examine younger men's experience of prostate cancer diagnosis, treatment and survival, and to understand how this experience influenced their sense of masculinity and daily lives.

Research methodology

- Ethical approval was gained from the SAOLTA Clinical Research Ethics Committee (C.A. 1044).
- Data was collected using semi-structured interviews.
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to examine 26 younger men's experience of prostate cancer (mean age 49 years).

Participant profiles

- 26 participants
- Male
- Middle aged (39-59 years)
- 22 married, 1 single, 2 separated & single, 1 separated with partner
- Treatment ~ 19 SX, 4 INV, 3 Both
- Education level ~ 11 3rd level, 15 2nd level
- Employed (16), not working (10)



Key findings relating to mental health

- o Men's testimonies in this study point to evidence that the effect of prostate cancer diagnosis and need to adjust to and cope with side-effects of treatment had a notable impact on their mental health, well-being and daily lives.
- o The experience of low mood and depression in men appeared to be transient in nature and was particularly linked to the experience of erectile dysfunction and incontinence following treatment.
- o 13 men reporting having 'low mood days' and 10 men reported that PC directly effected their mental health.

Men's Testimonies

- o We were watching the PSA climb, I didn't like that kind of feeling over me, mentally it was doing my head in, and we made the decision then to get it out. (Eamon, age 52).
- o I went down in the dumps, as a man says as low as you can go, thinking and worrying, I didn't say much to the wife and the children, I went off into a world on my own. I went to the doctor and it turned out that I had depression and I have been treated for it all the time since (Colin, age 49).
- o It's just that you're not functioning properly and that can play on your mind "what's wrong like? Why is this gone now? Why isn't this happening?" Do you know? it gets you down. (Alan, age 55).
- o Ah you would surely experience blue periods. When it comes to your own house and your own partner ... If you keep your mind right it's half the battle. I'm back into the gym doing weights, walking, I'm doing the chores. I'm eating healthy and juicing vegetables, If you keep your mind right it's half the battle. (Karl, 46).

Closing remarks

- o It is apparent that men's adjustment to treatment for prostate cancer is influenced by their adherence to traditional masculine narratives, which may both assist them in recovery and deprive them of important sources of social and emotional support.
- o There is a need to revisit how survivorship care is provided to younger men so as to ensure improved outcomes. The opportunity exists for healthcare professionals to provide referral to sports programmes, community based social supports or PCSGs in order to maximise improvements in mental and physical well-being post-treatment for PC.
- o Finally, the provision of specialist nursing care and support across the care pathway in areas such as sexual dysfunction, management of fatigue and incontinence, mental health and psychological care should be prioritised.