



Media release

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Prostate cancer patients worry about loss of 'masculinity'

Men reluctant to talk about it, but wives and partners will

Adelaide: New research being presented at a scientific conference of cancer experts today (12/11) shows that men with prostate cancer are less likely to report emotional and psychological effects of impaired sexual function than their wives and partners.

Lead author Kevin O'Shaughnessy, from The University of South Australia, will tell the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia's (COSA's) Annual Scientific Meeting that wives and partners can provide healthcare professionals with a powerful and unique insight into the ego and psychosocial status of men living with prostate cancer.

Mr O'Shaughnessy explained that 71% of wives and partners questioned believed prostate cancer had affected how their men felt about their masculinity. By contrast, only 42% of men reported this was the case.

"Men seem to be struggling to identify or articulate how impaired sexual function has affected their masculinity, libido and intimate relationships," Mr O'Shaughnessy said.

"Health professionals need to better understand wives and partners' roles and provide them with the education and confidence needed to support their partners and guide their relationships through such challenges."

The research consisted of a web-based survey, focus groups and couple interviews.

COSA President, Associate Professor Sandro Porceddu, said prostate cancer was the most common cancer diagnosed in Australia¹, with 85% of cases diagnosed in men aged 65 and over. Common side-effects of treatment include erectile dysfunction and incontinence.

"Earlier diagnosis and more effective treatments mean more men are surviving prostate cancer and living with the aftermath of treatment than ever before," Prof. Porceddu said. "Research like this is important as we navigate how best to meet men's supportive care needs.

"It is also important to note that not all prostate cancers require treatment. Patients need to consider the possible impact treatment could have on their quality of life and discuss all options with their doctor before deciding what course to take."

¹Excluding non-melanoma skin cancer.

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