

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL OF SEXUAL SELF-PERCEPTION AND ACTIVITY IN MEN FOLLOWING TREATMENT FOR PROSTATE CANCER

Narelle HANLY¹, Ilona JURASKOVA², Patricia WEERAKOON³, Dariusz SKOWRONSKI³

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¹Department of Urology, Concord Hospital, Sydney, NSW, Australia,

²Medical Psychology Research Unit, School of Psychology, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia,

³School of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Health Science, The University of Sydney, Lidcombe, NSW, Australia

INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES: In Australia, prostate cancer is the most common cancer; in men and there are therefore many men living with the consequences of the disease and its treatment. Many of the treatment options for prostate cancer have the potential to affect urinary and/or sexual function and self-image. Most of the literature describes the frequency of treatment side effects rather than exploring how these impact on the men's relationships and life. There is evidence that early in diagnosis, sexuality issues are minimized as men are focused on treatment of their cancer. It is post treatment, that the frustration of not achieving an erection interrupts the process of couple intimacy and the recommencement of sexual life. At this stage a new norm can be established since loss of erectile function does not preclude achieving orgasm for either partner and other physical activities are possible. Natural hesitancy to confront the issue and lack of appropriate resources inhibit the management of this couple concern. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology, the current project aims to explore the adjustment process of men following treatment for prostate cancer.

METHOD: Face-to-face semi-structured interviews with twenty members of the Concord Hospital Prostate Cancer Support Group will be conducted. Participants will also complete a questionnaire with standardized measures assessing sexual functioning, sexual self-schema, quality of life, urinary, bowel and hormonal symptoms, psychological wellbeing, and unmet needs. To ensure representation of all relevant experiences, systematic recruitment of men: i) at various stages of recovery; ii) of various age groups; iii) with different stages of prostate cancer; and iv) treated with various treatments, will be undertaken.

SIGNIFICANCE: This research will lead to the development of an educational tool for use by men/couples as a resource to resume intimacy during the period of post-treatment recovery and rehabilitation.