

Life After Prostate Cancer Diagnosis: A population-wide patient-reported outcome study

Lay summary

What is the study about?

Many men now survive for long periods after a diagnosis of prostate cancer. These men are at risk of experiencing physical, social and emotional problems as a result of the cancer and its treatment. The Life After Prostate Cancer Diagnosis (LAPCD) study is a large-scale assessment of outcomes in men with prostate cancer across all 4 nations of the UK. It has also collected comparable information from men in the general population. The aim of this current study was to report the functional outcomes and health-related quality of life (HRQL) of men with prostate cancer and compare these with men in the general population.

What did we do?

Men still alive 18-42 months after a diagnosis of prostate cancer were sent a survey. The survey included questions about their diagnosis, treatment, general health, physical function, social difficulties and emotional problems. 2,955 men of the same age without prostate cancer filled in a similar survey. This study looks at the problems men report with urinary, bowel, sexual and hormonal function, the use of interventions for sexual problems and quality of general health.

What did we find?

35,823 men with prostate cancer filled in a survey (61% of men invited). Poor sexual function was very common (79% of men with prostate cancer and 48% of men in the general population reported this). Sexual function worsened with age, but older men with prostate cancer were less likely to view this as a problem. Few men with prostate cancer said they were offered help with sexual problems (medication: 41%; devices: 23%; specialist services: 15%). Overall, 57% of men were not offered any of these interventions. Men with prostate cancer reported more problems than men in the general population with leaking urine, bowel urgency, lack of energy and depression. Men with prostate cancer reported less pain/discomfort than the general population men. The two groups of men report a similar quality of general health. This was lower in men with advanced (stage IV) cancer compared to men with localized disease (stage I and II).

How will these results be used?

This large study has shown that 18-42 months after prostate cancer diagnosis, men report similar quality of general health to the general population. However, men with prostate cancer experience significant urinary, bowel and sexual problems with poor provision of sexual support. These results will be fed back to clinicians and providers of care. Changes to services are needed to address these problems and to further improve the quality of survival after cancer.