

Lay summary

Title: A qualitative metasynthesis exploring the impact of prostate cancer and its management on younger, unpartnered and gay men

Main findings:

Men who are not the 'typical' patient with prostate cancer – those who are younger (under 65 years), without a partner, and/or gay, have specific needs for support and information

Men from these groups can feel marginalised, a sense of loneliness, and struggle to accept the impact on their sexual relationships, identities and work life.

Health professionals should provide men with tailored information and support that is relevant to their age, stage in life, marital status and sexuality.

What was the question?

To explore what is known already in the scientific literature regarding the experiences of men with prostate cancer who are a) younger b) single and/or c) gay or bisexual

What did we do?

We searched the scientific literature to find research articles that explored the impact of having a prostate cancer (PCa) diagnosis. From this, we found 171 articles. We then looked at which of these studies included men with PCa who were a) under 65 years old (7 articles) b) without a partner (17 articles) and c) gay or bisexual (11 articles). We looked at these articles in detail for common themes for each of these groups of men with PCa.

What did we find?

A common theme for these groups of men included a sense of being marginalised or 'out of sync' from other men with PCa or from their communities. Some men reported a sense of stigma and loneliness.

Younger men in particular felt they had aged before their time, and struggled to accept the change in sexual function. They also struggled with the change to their identities, physical fitness, work life and the emotional impact of PCa.

Themes for single men included fears over their ability to have future sexual relationships due to sexual dysfunction. These men also reported lower confidence to approach potential partners. Some single men felt they were well supported, while others appeared lonely, and relied strongly on the clinician when making treatment decisions.

Gay men reported a sense of stigma in their communities after having the PCa diagnosis, due to sexual problems. This was particularly the case for gay men who were also single. Some gay men felt that their health care was geared towards heterosexual men and did not address the needs and concerns of gay men.

What does this mean?

Health professionals need to be aware that men who are younger (under 65), single and/or gay with PCa may have specific needs for information and support.

Information that men receive should be tailored and relevant to their age, stage in life, marital status and sexuality.

Men from these groups may require further support regarding the impact on work, identity, sexual relationships and emotional changes due to PCa.