

## CHAPTER 6

# The Social Dimensions of Prostate Cancer in Gay Men's Sexuality

*Gary W. Dowsett, Duane Duncan, Andrea Waling, Daniel R. du Plooy, and Garrett P. Prestage*

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

Much of the research on men and prostate cancer has neglected gay and bisexual men. Assumptions are made that gay men are men too, so they must have the same experiences as heterosexual men. Recent research, however, has shown marked differences between gay and bisexual men and heterosexual men in diagnosis, treatment, care, and support. This chapter considers the recent research that is beginning to understand gay men's different experiences of prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment, arguing that a focus on the social dimensions of gay men's sexuality is needed. Three issues are explored: gay sex and sexuality, gay relationships and gay community, and HIV infection.

### KEY TERMS

gay community, gay men, gay relationships, HIV infection, sex, sex-based sociality, sexuality

## REFERENCES

1. Bruce A, Sheilds L, Molzahn A, et al. Stories of liminality: Living with life-threatening illness. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*. 2014; 32 (1): 35–43.
2. Perlman G, Drescher J. *A gay man's guide to prostate cancer*. Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Medical Press; 2005.
3. Blank TO. Gay men and prostate cancer: Invisible diversity. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. 2005; 23 (12): 2593–2596.
4. Hoyt MA, Carpenter KM. Sexual self-schema and depressive symptoms after prostate cancer. *Psycho-Oncology*. 2015; 24 (4): 395–401.
5. Bell K, Ristovski-Slijepcevic S. Cancer survivorship: Why labels matter. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. 2013; 31 (4): 409–411.
6. Plummer K. *Telling sexual stories: Power, change, and social worlds*. London: Routledge; 1995.
7. Park CL, Zlateva I, Blank TO. Self-identity after cancer: "Survivor," "victim," "patient," and "person with cancer." *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2009; 24 (Suppl. 2): S430–435.
8. Dowsett GW, Wain D, Keys D. Good gay men don't get "messy": Injecting drug use and gay community. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*. 2005; 2 (1): 22–36.
9. Dowsett GW, Prestage G, Duncan D, et al. *Moving on: Mental health, resilience and sexual recovery among gay men living with prostate cancer*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University; 2015.
10. Llorente MD, Burke M, Gregory GR, et al. Prostate cancer: A significant risk factor for late-life suicide. *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. 2005; 13 (3): 195–201.
11. Sharpley CF, Bitsika V, Wootten AC, Christie DRH. Predictors of depression in prostate cancer patients: A comparison of psychological resilience versus pre-existing anxiety and depression. *Journal of Men's Health*. 2014; 11 (3): 115–120.
12. Carman M, Corboz J, Dowsett GW. Falling through the cracks: The gap between evidence and policy in responding to depression in gay, lesbian and other homosexually active people in Australia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 2012; 36 (1): 76–83.
13. Rosser BRS, Capistrant B, Torres B, et al. The effects of radical prostatectomy on gay and bisexual men's mental health, sexual identity and relationships: Qualitative results from the Restore study. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*. 2016; 31 (4): 446–461.
14. Wassersug RJ, Lyons A, Duncan D, et al. Diagnostic and outcome differences between heterosexual and nonheterosexual men treated for prostate cancer. *Urology*. 2013; 82 (3): 565–571.

15. Hart TL, Coon DW, Kowalkowski MA, et al. Changes in sexual roles and quality of life for gay men after prostate cancer: Challenges for sexual health providers. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. 2014; 11 (9): 2308–2317.
16. Lee TK, Handy AB, Kwan W, et al. Impact of prostate cancer treatment on the sexual quality of life for men-who-have-sex-with-men. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. 2015; 12 (12): 2378–2386.
17. Allensworth-Davies D, Talcott JA, Heeren T, et al. The health effects of masculine self-esteem following treatment for localized prostate cancer among gay men. *LGBT Health*. 2015; 3 (1): 49–56.
18. Capistrant BD, Torres B, Merengwa E, et al. Caregiving and social support for gay and bisexual men with prostate cancer. *Psycho-Oncology*. 2016; 25 (11): 1329–1336.
19. Dowsett GW, Lyons A, Duncan D, Wassersug RJ. Flexibility in men's sexual practices in response to iatrogenic erectile dysfunction after prostate cancer treatment. *Sexual Medicine*. 2014; 2 (3): 115–120.
20. Wassersug RJ, Westle A, Dowsett GW. Men's sexual and relational adaptations to erectile dysfunction after prostate cancer treatment. *International Journal of Sexual Health*. 2017; 29 (1): 69–79.
21. Lyons A, Pitts M, Grierson J. Versatility and HIV vulnerability: Patterns of insertive and receptive anal sex in a national sample of older Australian gay men. *AIDS and Behavior*. 2013; 17 (4): 1370–1377.
22. Walker LM, Wassersug RJ, Robinson JW. Psychosocial perspectives on sexual recovery after prostate cancer treatment. *Nature Reviews Urology*. 2015; 12 (3): 167–176.
23. Sanders SA, Milhausen RR, Crosby RA, et al. Do phosphodiesterase type 5 inhibitors protect against condom-associated erection loss and condom slippage? *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. 2009; 6 (5): 1451–1456.
24. Kippax S, Crawford J, Davis M, et al. Sustaining safe sex: A longitudinal study of a sample of homosexual men. *AIDS*. 1993; 7 (2): 257–263.
25. Philpot SP, Ellard J, Duncan D, et al. Gay and bisexual men's interest in marriage: An Australian perspective. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*. 2016; 18 (12): 1347–1362.
26. Bavinton BR, Duncan D, Grierson J, et al. The meaning of "regular partner" in HIV research among gay and bisexual men: Implications of an Australian cross-sectional survey. *AIDS and Behavior*. 2016; 20 (8): 1777–1784.
27. Ussher JM, Perz J, Rose D, et al. Threat of sexual disqualification: The consequences of erectile dysfunction and other sexual changes for gay and bisexual men with prostate cancer. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 2017; 46 (7): 2043–2057.
28. Prostate Cancer UK. Prostate facts for gay and bisexual men. <https://prostatecanceruk.org/prostate-information/living-with-prostate-cancer/gay-and-bisexual-men>.
29. Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia. Gay and bisexual men. [www.prostate.org.au/awareness/for-recently-diagnosed-men-and-their-families/gay-and-bisexual-men](http://www.prostate.org.au/awareness/for-recently-diagnosed-men-and-their-families/gay-and-bisexual-men).

30. Malecare. Gay man's guide to prostate cancer and doctors. <http://malecare.org/gay-prostate-cancer-and-doctors/>.
31. Prostate Cancer Canada. Gay and bisexual men & prostate cancer. [www.prostatecancer.ca/Prostate-Cancer/Facing-Prostate-Cancer/Gay-and-Bisexual-Men-Prostate-Cancer](http://www.prostatecancer.ca/Prostate-Cancer/Facing-Prostate-Cancer/Gay-and-Bisexual-Men-Prostate-Cancer).
32. Matheson L, Watson EK, Nayoan J, et al. A qualitative metasynthesis exploring the impact of prostate cancer and its management on younger, unpartnered and gay men. *European Journal of Cancer Care*. 2017; doi: 10.1111/ecc.12676.
33. O'Shaughnessy P, Laws TA. Australian men's long term experiences following prostatectomy: A qualitative descriptive study. *Contemporary Nurse*. 2009; 34 (1): 98–109.
34. Taylor-Ford M, Meyerowitz BE, D'Orazio LM, et al. Body image predicts quality of life in men with prostate cancer. *Psycho-Oncology*. 2013; 22 (4): 756–761.
35. Duncan D. Embodying the gay self: Body image, reflexivity and embodied identity. *Health Sociology Review*. 2010; 19 (4): 437–450.
36. Ussher JM, Rose D, Perz J. Mastery, isolation, or acceptance: Gay and bisexual men's construction of aging in the context of sexual embodiment after prostate cancer. *Journal of Sex Research*. 2017; 54 (6): 802–812.
37. Crum NF, Hale B, Utz G, Wallace M. Increased risk of prostate cancer in HIV infection? *AIDS*. 2002; 16 (12): 1703–1704.
38. Crum-Cianflone NF, Hullsiek KH, Marconi V, et al. Trends in the incidence of cancers among HIV-infected persons and the impact of antiretroviral therapy: Authors' reply. *AIDS*. 2009; 23 (13): 1791–1792.
39. Wosnitzer MS, Lowe FC. Management of prostate cancer in HIV-positive patients. *Nature Reviews Urology*. 2010; 7 (6): 348–357.
40. Marcus JL, Chao CR, Leyden WA, et al. Prostate cancer incidence and prostate-specific antigen testing among HIV-positive and HIV-negative men. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*. 2014; 66 (5): 495–502.
41. Smith DM, Kingery JD, Wong JK, et al. The prostate as a reservoir for HIV-1. *AIDS*. 2004; 18 (11): 1600–1602.
42. Treichler PA. AIDS, homophobia, and biomedical discourse: An epidemic of signification. In Crimp D, ed. *AIDS: Cultural analysis, cultural activism*. Cambridge: MIT Press; 1987: 31–70.
43. Herek GM. A nuanced view of stigma for understanding and addressing sexual and gender minority health disparities. *LGBT Health*. 2016; 3 (6): 397–399.

44. Dowsett GW. The "gay plague" revisited: AIDS and its enduring moral panic. In Herdt G, ed. *Moral panics, sex panics: Fear and the fight over sexual rights*. New York: New York University Press; 2009: 130–156.
45. Meyer IH. Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*. 2003; 129 (5): 674–697.
46. Dowsett GW. I'll show you mine, if you'll show me yours: Gay men, masculinity research, men's studies, and sex. *Theory and Society*. 1993; 22 (5): 697–709.
47. Connell RW. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed. Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin; 2005.

Other Battles Some Gay Men With Prostate Cancer Face. While gay men seem to have about the same rates of prostate cancer as men in general — making it the most diagnosed cancer among all men, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — a review conducted by Rosser and colleagues suggests that gay survivors have poorer sexual functioning and lower quality of life. Researchers' interviews with men hint at numerous reasons why.Â But for many gay men, working with a provider who knows and honors their sexual orientation is important in part because more often than straight men, "sex, at some point has been a critical part of their personal story," Hoyt says. The social dimension of prostate cancer in gay men's sexuality. Much of the research on men and prostate cancer has neglected gay and bisexual men. Assumptions are made that gay men are men too, so they must have the same experiences as heterosexual men. Recent research, however, has shown marked more. Much of the research on men and prostate cancer has neglected gay and bisexual men. Assumptions are made that gay men are men too, so they must have the same experiences as heterosexual men. Recent research, however, has shown marked differences between gay and bisexual men and heterosexual m...

Prostate cancer is cancer of the prostate. The prostate is a gland in the male reproductive system that surrounds the urethra just below the bladder. Most prostate cancers are slow growing. Cancerous cells may spread to other areas of the body, particularly the bones and lymph nodes. It may initially cause no symptoms. In later stages, symptoms include pain or difficulty urinating, blood in the urine, or pain in the pelvis or back. Benign prostatic hyperplasia may produce similar symptoms. Other late Rates of prostate cancer are largely the same among gays and others, but sexual functioning issues and quality of life bring different concerns. Like many men in his position, Rose turned to the internet for information. But because he included "gay" in his search terms, he didn't find it. "I think I found maybe one article, and it wasn't real helpful," says Rose, whose urologist didn't know he is gay. [See: What Only Your Partner Knows About Your Health.] Though the internet landscape has changed since his diagnosis in 2003, Rose's experience is still representative of the lack of awareness and research surrounding how prostate cancer may affect gay men differently than straight men. Men who have sex with men (MSM) are less likely to get regular prostate cancer screenings, and those who are diagnosed are less likely to have familial and social support, according to research cited by the National Institutes of Health . And if their health care provider is not culturally competent, gay and bisexual men are much less likely to understand how treatment will impact their quality of life. He joined a prostate cancer support group specifically for gay and bisexual men at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, one of several organized by the national advocacy organization MaleCare . Being with other queer men "allowed us to be very open about our feelings" and our sexuality" and to be empathetic with each other," Brass said. Factors affecting sexual adjustment in men with cancer include: Altered body image due to weight changes, hair loss or surgical disfigurement; Change in hormonal status due to treatment: Changes in sex hormones (androgens such as testosterone) affect libido and ability to orgasm; and. For more information on prostate cancer, including diagnoses, types of treatments, and some useful tools, videos and animations, see Prostate Cancer. Sexuality, body image and quality of life after high dose or conventional chemotherapy for metastatic breast cancer. Can J Hum Sex. 1997; 6: 1-8. Prostate cancer occurs in the prostate gland, which is located just below the bladder in males and surrounds the top portion of the tube that drains urine from the bladder (urethra). This illustration shows a normal prostate gland and a prostate with a tumor. Prostate cancer is cancer that occurs in the prostate. The prostate is a small walnut-shaped gland in males that produces the seminal fluid that nourishes and transports sperm. Prostate cancer is one of the most common types of cancer. Many prostate cancers grow slowly and are confined to the prostate gland, where they may not cause serio