

Practitioner perceptions of prostate cancer patients' motives for physical activity and the opportunity for a teachable moment

Asmita Patel, Grant M Schofield, Justin WL Keogh

Globally, prostate cancer (PCa) is one of the most diagnosed male cancers.¹ Early detection and advancements in treatment options have resulted in increased survivorship.² Physical activity (PA) is a modifiable lifestyle behaviour that can benefit men throughout the PCa continuum, from diagnosis and treatment, through to remission and survivorship.²⁻⁵ PA can provide protective benefits for men who are receiving treatment for their PCa.²⁻⁵ Aerobic and resistance exercise can help counteract side effects of androgen deprivation therapy (ADT), such as weight gain and loss of muscle mass, which can be risk factors for type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and osteoporosis.² Targeted pelvic floor exercises (especially through supervised physiotherapy) can benefit men who have had a radical prostatectomy and are experiencing urinary incontinence and erectile dysfunction.⁶ Regular PA can also provide protective benefits for survivors of PCa, who as a group can be at risk for PCa recurrence, secondary cancers and cardiovascular disease.^{2,3}

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) roundtable on exercise guidelines for cancer survivors recommends 150 minutes of moderate intensity PA per week.^{3,7} The majority of PCa survivors are not engaging in sufficient PA to achieve health-related gain.⁵ More understanding is required regarding motives for PA in PCa survivors.

The aim of this study was to identify what healthcare practitioners perceive as being their PCa patients' motives for PA.

The participants were five healthcare practitioners from the fields of urology and oncology who provide specialist treatment to men diagnosed with PCa and who had taken part in a larger qualitative study designed to identify factors that influence healthcare practitioners to promote PA to their patients with PCa.⁸ Participants were

individually interviewed at their place of work, and interview data were analysed using an inductive thematic approach. Two main themes were identified.

Theme one: the cancer diagnosis

This theme highlighted how a diagnosis of PCa could be a catalyst for making positive lifestyle changes, especially those relating to diet and PA:

“The moment they hear that there is cancer, they want to do everything they can. They're happy to change their diet, to become more physically active to help improve their health. You explain to them that it is important for their prostate cancer and their general health. They do respond to that.” – Practitioner 2, urologist

“People change once they get their diagnosis. It's the cancer that's the motivating factor. They change their diet and try to improve it. They start to exercise. They try and do all these things.” – Practitioner 5, urologist

Theme two: physical activity to counteract treatment-related side effects

A perceived motive for engaging in PA was to help counteract treatment-related side effects, especially those related to hormone suppression therapy:

“There's a whole host of motives to try and delay cancer progression and prevent side effects of treatment.”

They do automatically look at their lifestyle. Trying to be more active. – Practitioner 8, medical oncologist

“They will use physical activity to help them to stay fit and trim because of the treatment side effects.” – Practitioner 11, radiation oncologist

A diagnosis of PCa can lead to a teachable moment when men are more receptive to making positive healthy lifestyle changes, especially those relating to diet and PA.⁹ Healthcare practitioners are ideally positioned to facilitate a teachable moment through enquiring about a patient’s current PA engagement and providing any form of PA advice or referral to a PA programme or physiotherapist.^{8,9} PCa patients are receptive to receiving PA advice (i.e., verbal, written or referral) from

their healthcare practitioner, as healthcare practitioners are perceived to be credible and trusted sources of information.^{8–10} Findings from a qualitative study involving patients who had localised PCa reported that men wanted to receive lifestyle information and advice from their healthcare practitioner(s) at the time of their PCa diagnosis, despite having to deal with their diagnosis and treatment.⁹ Men can feel empowered if lifestyle information is provided earlier in the cancer journey, as they can engage in behaviour(s) that can benefit their health and wellbeing.⁹

The practitioners in the present study also perceived that their PCa patients engaged in PA to help counteract treatment-related side effects, which is consistent with the literature.^{2–6} Future research will qualitatively identify how practitioners have advised and supported their PCa patients to try and overcome barriers to PA.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Nil.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was funded by the Cancer Society of New Zealand through a 3-year Prostate Cancer Young Investigator Scholarship for the first author. We would like to thank the healthcare practitioners who took part in this study.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Asmita Patel: Research Manager, South Pacific College of Natural Medicine, Auckland, New Zealand.

Grant M Schofield: Chief Science Officer, PREKURE, Auckland, New Zealand.

Justin WL Keogh: Associate Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine, Bond University, Queensland, Australia.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Asmita Patel: South Pacific College of Natural Medicine, PO Box 11-311, Ellerslie, Auckland 1542, New Zealand.
E: asmita.patel@spcnm.ac.nz

URL

<https://nzmj.org.nz/journal/vol-139-no-1635/practitioner-perceptions-of-prostate-cancer-patients-motives-for-physical-activity-and-the-opportunity-for-a-teachable-moment>

CITATION

Patel A, Schofield GM, Keogh JWL. Practitioner perceptions of prostate cancer patients' motives for physical activity and the opportunity for a teachable moment. *N Z Med J*. 2026 May 29;139(1635):108-110. doi: 10.26635/6965.7265.

REFERENCES

- Bergengren O, Pekala KR, Matsoukas K, et al. 2022 Update on Prostate Cancer Epidemiology and Risk Factors-A Systematic Review. *Eur Urol*. 2023 Aug;84(2):191-206. doi: 10.1016/j.eururo.2023.04.021.
- Newton RU, Galvao DA. Exercise medicine for prostate cancer. *Eur Rev Aging Phys Act*. 2013 Jan;10:1041-1045. doi: 10.1007/s11556-012-0114-4.
- Schmitz KH, Courneya KS, Matthews C, et al. American College of Sports Medicine roundtable on exercise guidelines for cancer survivors. *Med Sci Sports Exerc*. 2010 Jul;42(7):1409-26. doi: 10.1249/MSS.0b013e3181e0c112. Erratum in: *Med Sci Sports Exerc*. 2011 Jan;43(1):195.
- Campos C, Sotomayor P, Jerez D, et al. Exercise and prostate cancer: From basic science to clinical applications. *Prostate*. 2018 Jun;78(9):639-645. doi: 10.1002/pros.23502.
- Kenfield SA, Chan JM. More evidence that physical activity is beneficial for prostate cancer. *Prostate Cancer Prostatic Dis*. 2022 Sep;25(3):383-384. doi: 10.1038/s41391-022-00509-6.
- Bernardo-Filho M, Barbosa Júnior ML, da Cunha Sá-Caputo D, et al. The relevance of the procedures related to the physiotherapy in the interventions in patients with prostate cancer: short review with practice approach. *Int J Biomed Sci*. 2014 Jun;10(2):73-84.
- Campbell KL, Winters-Stone KM, Wiskemann J, et al. Exercise Guidelines for Cancer Survivors: Consensus Statement from International Multidisciplinary Roundtable. *Med Sci Sports Exerc*. 2019 Nov;51(11):2375-2390. doi: 10.1249/MSS.0000000000002116.
- Patel A, Schofield G, Keogh J. Influences on healthcare practitioners' promotion of physical activity to their patients with prostate cancer: a qualitative study. *J Prim Health Care*. 2018 Mar;10(1):31-38. doi: 10.1071/HC17036.
- Sutton E, Hackshaw-McGeagh LE, Aning J, et al. The provision of dietary and physical activity advice for men diagnosed with prostate cancer: a qualitative study of the experiences and views of health care professionals, patients and partners. *Cancer Causes Control*. 2017 Feb;28(4):319-329. doi: 10.1007/s10552-017-0861-7.
- Patel A, Schofield GM, Keogh JWL. Motives for Physical Activity in Prostate Cancer Survivors: A Qualitative Exploration. *Am J Lifestyle Med*. 2022 Aug 27;19(1):138-146. doi: 10.1177/15598276221123003.