

Unemployment linked to rise in prostate cancer deaths

May 14 2015



Micrograph showing prostatic acinar adenocarcinoma (the most common form of prostate cancer) Credit: Wikipedia, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

The knock-on effects of the economic downturn have been explored in economy and psychology. Now researchers are examining the effects of unemployment on an even darker subject - cancer mortality.

One would think that dealing with [unemployment](#) was challenge enough. But according to the latest research published in *ecancermedicalscience*,

rises in unemployment are associated with significant increases in prostate [cancer mortality](#).

This is the first study that has systematically explored the [consequences](#) that changes in unemployment - in particular the Great Recession of the late 2000s - have had in generating excess deaths due to a treatable disease such as prostate cancer.

The effect continued for at least five years after a 1% rise in unemployment, says study author Johnathan Watkins of King's College London, London, UK.

But was the effect simply due to the fact that the unemployed patients might belong to social groups that are more likely to experience [prostate cancer mortality](#)?

Apparently not. The trend continued even after researchers controlled the effect of competing forces such as economic factors, infrastructure, hospital resources, and health care spending.

The researchers are keeping an open mind about the exact causes of this correlation - it's likely due to a cohort of factors influenced by macroeconomics, such as changes in nutrition, societal challenges, and possibly even psychological outcomes.

"There are two broad implications emerging from this study," Watkins explains. "First, policies that support employment may have positive knock-on effects on mortality rates from a treatable disease such as prostate cancer.

"Second, healthcare professionals should be aware of the additional risks entailed by unemployment, and facilitate access of care to this population."

"Both policy makers and clinicians can work together to mitigate the health outcome effects of unemployment."

But there's some hope to be found in the study: initiatives that bolster employment may have societal knock-on effects of their own.

Watkins and colleagues suggest that support initiatives may thus help to minimise prostate cancer mortality during times of economic hardship.

The reasons for avoiding economic downturns and prostate cancer are obvious to all, but it's good to see another reason to take an interest in economic and physical health.

More information: *ecancer* 9 538 / [DOI: 10.3332/ecancer.2015.538](https://doi.org/10.3332/ecancer.2015.538)

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Citation: Unemployment linked to rise in prostate cancer deaths (2015, May 14) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-unemployment-linked-prostate-cancer-deaths.html>

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