

Coping with active surveillance anxiety in prostate cancer

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Men with prostate cancer who are under close medical surveillance reported significantly greater resilience and less anxiety over time after receiving an intervention of mindfulness meditation, according to a recently published pilot study from the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

The anxiety and uncertainty that men who choose [active surveillance](#) experience when diagnosed with prostate cancer causes one in four to receive definitive therapies within one to three years, even when there is no sign of tumor progression.

Health psychologist David Victorson, the principal investigator of the study and an associate professor of medical social sciences at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, researches the emotional stress of active surveillance and how mindfulness training helps alleviate the anxiety.

Mindfulness meditation is a well-known contemplative awareness practice dating back some 2,500 years. It is a form of meditation designed to develop the skill of paying attention to our inner and outer experiences with acceptance, patience and compassion.

"It's very understandable that some men will feel concerned with the knowledge that they indeed have [prostate cancer](#) but are asked to NOT do anything to remove it," Victorson said. "For many men this can create a great deal of inner turmoil. This turmoil can build up over time and

eventually lead to men seeking [surgical intervention](#) when it may not ultimately be necessary."

Victorson and his Northwestern team now are partnering with other academic medical institutions to conduct a five-year multi-site controlled trial where men and their spouses will be randomized to eight weeks of intensive [mindfulness meditation](#) training or an eight-week control group.

"I believe we have an opportunity to investigate and equip men with additional tools above and beyond surgical intervention that can help them manage cancer-related uncertainty intolerance," Victorson said.

Provided by Northwestern University

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