

# Distress in men following prostate cancer can be reduced

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A new web-based support programme will help reduce the psychological stress that impacts men who are recovering from prostate cancer.

The new programme, which has been developed by researchers at the University of Surrey working alongside NHS clinicians, offers online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions and both filmed and interactive peer support to survivors of the disease. Prostate [cancer](#) is the UK's most common cancer in men with over 47,000 cases diagnosed annually.

Side effects of treatment such as urinary, sexual and bowel problems and body issues can have a negative effect on men's psychological wellbeing. Recent studies have shown that 65 per cent of men with [prostate cancer](#) report unmet psychological needs and up to a third experience anxiety and depression. Men with [prostate](#) cancer also have a higher risk of suicide than their healthy male counterparts, showing a lack of provision for psychological wellbeing within this group.

A study based on the new platform, published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research Cancer*, reported that men who used the new system found it helped them cope after having prostate cancer. Men reported feeling empowered by the programme signalling a change of attitude in how they approach life post cancer.

Lead author Jane Cockle-Hearne, a Research Fellow at the University of Surrey, said: "Men traditionally are reticent about seeking help for their

mental health, particularly when it is related to prostate cancer. This may be due to embarrassment about asking for help or a reluctance to admit they have a problem, either physical or emotional. What we have found is that this can lead to longer periods of depression and anxiety, which over time can seriously affect a person's quality of life and how well they cope with their physical problems.

"Thanks to medical advances in diagnosis and treatment, increasing numbers of men are surviving prostate cancer, which is incredibly welcome. But we must act now to treat their mental health too. This new programme will enable men to get the information and support they need, as well as providing the NHS with a cost effective way to deliver high quality health care."

**More information:** Jane Cockle-Hearne et al. A Web-Based Intervention to Reduce Distress After Prostate Cancer Treatment: Development and Feasibility of the Getting Down to Coping Program in Two Different Clinical Settings, *JMIR Cancer* (2018). [DOI: 10.2196/cancer.8918](https://doi.org/10.2196/cancer.8918)

Provided by University of Surrey

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