

Widowers more likely to be diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer

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Social environment is a key factor in the risk of developing prostate cancer. Ph.D. student Charlotte Salmon and Professor Marie-Élise Parent of Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS) have

shown that widowers are more likely to be diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. Their research results have been published in the *European Journal of Epidemiology*.

The link was first identified following analysis of 12 studies from the [international consortium PRACTICAL](#) comparing 14,000 men newly diagnosed with [prostate cancer](#) and 12,000 healthy men. "This large group of subjects showed us that widowers were at risk of being diagnosed later than married men or men in relationships. As a result, when the diagnosis is made, the disease has often metastasized elsewhere in the body," said doctoral student Salmon, whose thesis focuses on social isolation and the incidence of prostate cancer.

Screening and lifestyle

Numerous studies suggest that the link to [marital status](#) exists because living with a partner promotes a "healthier" lifestyle. "Without a spouse's encouragement to see a doctor or get screened if there are symptoms, cancers remain undetected longer and may be diagnosed at a more advanced stage. This makes the prognosis bleaker," Salmon noted. To stay healthy, widowers should seek support from family and friends and more regular medical followup.

Other hypotheses to explain these findings include lifestyle factors such as alcohol consumption and the emotional impact of bereavement. In a 2020 [study](#), Professor Parent and researcher Karine Trudeau showed diet could also be a risk factor.

Future studies will provide a better understanding of why widowhood is associated with greater risk and help develop appropriate public health strategies.

Salmon will study not just men's marital status but also the number of

people living with them ([family members](#)), family structure, living environment (disadvantaged neighborhood or not), and other social factors.

The [Canadian Cancer Society](#) estimated that, in 2020, 23,300 men in Canada would be diagnosed with prostate cancer. On average, that is equivalent to 64 prostate cancer diagnoses and 11 deaths every day.

The article, "Marital status and prostate cancer incidence: a pooled analysis of 12 case–control studies from the PRACTICAL consortium," by Charlotte Salmon, Marie-Élise Parent et al., was published in the *European Journal of Epidemiology*.

More information: Charlotte Salmon et al, Marital status and prostate cancer incidence: a pooled analysis of 12 case–control studies from the PRACTICAL consortium, *European Journal of Epidemiology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s10654-021-00781-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10654-021-00781-1)

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