

# Mental health screenings urged for men with prostate cancer

August 5 2024

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Mental health screenings must be incorporated into routine prostate cancer diagnoses say University of South Australia researchers. The call follows [new research](#) in *Psycho-Oncology* that shows men need more

support both during and immediately after a diagnosis of prostate cancer.

The UniSA study tracked the scale and timing of mental health issues among 13,693 South Australian men with [prostate cancer](#), finding that 15% of prostate cancer patients began mental health medications directly after a prostate cancer diagnosis, with 6% seeking help from mental health services.

It's an important finding, not only highlighting the percentage of prostate cancer patients who seek mental health support, but notably, those who do not.

Every year, [more than 24,000 men](#) are diagnosed with prostate cancer, [with up to 40% of patients considered at risk of mental distress](#).

Lead researcher UniSA's Dr. Tenaw Tiruye says the study highlights an acute need to offer mental health services and support for all men diagnosed with prostate cancer.

"Prostate cancer is the most common cancer affecting Australian men. But despite high survival rates, psychological issues are one of the most frequently reported unmet needs among prostate cancer survivors," Dr. Tiruye says.

"Prostate cancer can take a serious toll on the mental health of men throughout all stages of the illness—including diagnosis, surveillance, treatment, and follow-up—with an estimated one in six people experiencing [clinical depression](#).

"In fact, the rates of depression and anxiety among [prostate cancer patients](#) are significantly higher than those in the general population, as is the risk of suicide.

"In our study we found that 15% of patients started anti-anxiety and anti-depression medications at the time of their diagnosis, and that 6% looked for mental health support. This shows that men are more likely to commence [psychotropic medications](#) than seek out [mental health services](#).

"But it also shows a significant gap, which is those men who have not sought help."

Senior researcher, UniSA's Dr. Kerri Beckmann says [fewer than a quarter of men ask for help](#) when it comes to their mental health.

"Whether it's the stigma surrounding mental health, or a fear about being seen as weak, statistics show that many men struggle to seek help for mental health concerns," Dr. Beckmann says.

"So, rather than waiting for men to proactively seek out mental health support once they've been diagnosed with prostate cancer, we should be offering support at the time of [diagnosis](#) and throughout treatment. That way it can be seen as a normal and required part of treatment.

"Only by normalizing mental health discussions, can we improve access to well-being tools and services, to ensure that men with prostate cancer have every opportunity to voice their struggles and receive the [support](#) they need."

**More information:** Tenaw Tiruye et al, Temporal trends in medication and service use patterns for mental health issues among men with prostate cancer, *Psycho-Oncology* (2024). [DOI: 10.1002/pon.6369](https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.6369)

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: Mental health screenings urged for men with prostate cancer (2024, August 5) retrieved 7 August 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-08-mental-health-screenings-urged-men.html>

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