Care after treatment is 'letting down' men with prostate cancer

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More than 8 in 10 men living with prostate cancer may not be getting the nursing care they need to prevent possible psychological and sexual problems following treatment, according to a new study published in the *British Journal of Cancer*.

A survey of around 1000 men (180 from the UK) diagnosed with prostate cancer2 across seven European countries3, found that while nursing care before and immediately after treatment for most men was amply provided, men reported receiving less advice and support for the longer-term effects of prostate cancer, as well as home care and aftercare.

More worryingly, 45 per cent of men reported having no contact at all with a nurse for areas like psychological and sexual needs.

For example, more than five in 10 (533) men reported neither seeing a nurse about home care, nor receiving any other advice on this topic. Among those who did see a nurse, over 40 per cent (147) had not been given any advice.

Dr Sara Faithfull, professor of cancer nursing practice at the University of Surrey and one of the study authors, said: "This is the first study in Europe to look at the quality of the care for men living with prostate cancer and we've found that there is a worrying gap between what prostate cancer patients need and what they are actually getting.

"The results show that long-term care following diagnosis needs to be improved."

The report also highlighted a difference between particular European countries with France and Spain reporting more men having issues in the area of psychological and sexual needs compared to other countries.4 The exact reason for these differences is unclear.

Martin Ledwick, Cancer Research UK's head information nurse, said: "The findings of this report are worrying and suggest that we may be letting down men with prostate cancer, not only in the UK, but across the European Union. Anyone with questions about prostate cancer can call Cancer Research UK's nurses on freephone 0808 800 4040."

More information: Cockle-Hearne, J et al. The impact of supportive nursing care on the needs of men with prostate cancer: a study across seven European countries (2013) *British Journal of Cancer*. DOI: 10.1038/bjc.2013.568

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