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How does prostate cancer affect partners?

Europa Uomo, the European prostate cancer patient coalition, has conducted the first ever patient-led study into the experiences of partners of men with prostate cancer. What are the physical and psychological burdens that the disease imposes on them?

The first results, to be announced at the European Association of Urology Congress in Paris, April 2024, are summarised here.

Background to study

Between 2019 and 2022, Europa Uomo conducted two survey-based studies examining the quality of life of men with prostate cancer in Europe and beyond. These EUPROMS studies showed that the quality of life of men was heavily compromised after treatment for prostate cancer. The vast majority of respondents were living with partners.

Europa Uomo wanted to find out more about how the lives of spouses, partners and caregivers were being affected. In October 2023 it launched EU-ProPER (Europa Uomo Prostate Partners' Experience Research), based around a targeted survey of 80 questions available in 17 languages. The survey ended on 31st December, and the data is now being analysed by researchers at the Department of Urology, Erasmus Cancer Institute in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

[View early results over page](#)



First findings

Respondent profile

1135 valid responses from partners in 27 countries

Partner's median age at completion: 68

Partner's median age at diagnosis: 61

Communication and information

16% of partners said they were not made aware of the possible consequences of treatment

18% said their healthcare provider had not mentioned the risk of incontinence before treatment

Only 20% said they had received information about sexuality from a health professional

78% said that healthcare providers should improve referral to other specialists or sexologists

One in ten did not share their partner's diagnosis with children or close family

Effect of cancer on relationship

46% of partners said that prostate cancer had affected their relationship

43% said it had brought them closer

15% said they are worried about their relationship

20% said they feel lonely

Health

Physical health of partners was lower than population norm (SF-12v2® Health Survey)

Mental health was equivalent to population norm

Sex life

53% of partners said their sex life is important to them

Only 27% said they are satisfied with their sex life

52% said their partner's incontinence has had an effect on their sex life

Social life

19% said their partner's prostate cancer has reduced their leisure and social activities

33% said their partner's incontinence has an effect on their social life

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20years Working for men with
prostate cancer in Europe