

What is the Prostate Cancer Survivorship Essentials Framework?

Treatments for prostate cancer have dramatically changed over the past two decades. Robot-assisted surgeries, refined methods of radiation therapy, a range of different hormone-blocking treatments, new chemotherapy regimens, and targeted or personalised medicine based on genomic profiling are now available.

Despite these medical developments, research shows that patients and the doctors, nurses and allied health professionals who look after them, find the experience of prostate cancer challenging, medically focused, and uncoordinated. Prostate cancer survivors remain at higher risk of anxiety, depression and suicide than the general population.

In 2019, a multi-disciplinary expert panel was formed to better understand the nature of prostate cancer survivorship.* The 47-member panel included leaders from key Australian and New Zealand clinical and community groups and consumers from diverse backgrounds, including LGBTQIA people and those from regional, rural and urban settings.

Panel members included urologists, medical and radiation oncologists, family doctors, nurses, and physiotherapists from organisations including Cancer Council Australia, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Cancer Voices New South Wales, Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand, Psychology Board of Australia, Flinders Centre for Innovation in Cancer, Australian Prostate Centre, Medical Oncology Group of Australia.

The panel reached the view that improving the quality of prostate cancer survivorship requires a high care focus on the wider psychosocial impacts of cancer as well as medical intervention.

Six essential aspects of survivorship, including the vitally important component of personal agency, were identified.

Health Promotion and Advocacy

This means having accurate information about prostate cancer for men, their partners, their family, and their community and advocating for better treatment and services when needed.

Shared Management

This means patients being an equal partner in their health care, sharing decision-making with the entire health care team, and sharing and discussing approaches to tackle challenges as they arise.

Vigilance

This refers to the clinical surveillance of patients across the entire survivorship experience from diagnosis onward via, for example, survivorship care plans. It includes attention to not only physical issues but also emotional and social wellbeing.

Personal Agency

Personal agency belongs to the patient. It is about supporting a man's ability to be self-aware and understand risk factors in the progress of their treatment journey and to seek assistance when needed. It does not mean leaving the patient to go it alone.

Care Coordination

This is about the health care team working together to get you the best care possible in a 'right place at the right time' approach. It means the entire team working together and communicating effectively, without siloing.

Evidence-based Survivorship Interventions

This is about using only resources and strategies that have strong evidence of effectiveness in supporting quality of survivorship. These include a range of emotional and mental wellbeing approaches as well as nutritional habits, exercise medicine, and sexual health support.

* BJUI 2020, <https://bjui-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/bju.15159>
BJUI 2021, <https://bjui-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bju.15358>