

Prostatectomy: fears and expectations

Daniele Caponcello, M.Sc., DPSS at University of Padua

danielecaPONcello@gmail.com

Rationale: Radical prostatectomy is often associated to some form of sexual dysfunction or discomfort. However, this aspect has often been studied in its more exclusively physical and physiological manifestation. In the current scientific landscape, psychosexual and relational aspects of the disease, of its diagnosis, and of its treatment have often been ignored.

Research Questions: This study aims to investigate fears, expectations, and anxieties related to the possible consequences that surgery may have on the couple. The research also focuses on the presence of a relationship between pre-operation erectile function and anxiety levels, along with the quality of information that the staff relays to patients.

Methods: A qualitative research in the Hospital of Padua was conducted: by means of *ad hoc* semi-structured interviews, patients were asked questions about their fear of loss of masculinity and strength, while their partners were asked questions about their fear of loss of intimacy. Both members of all couples answered to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, Spanier, 1976), Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A, Hamilton, 1959), Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D, Hamilton, 1960), in order to evaluate their psychological and relational condition. Male participants answered to the International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire Short Form (ICIQ-UI SF, Avery, Donovan, Peters, Shaw, Gotoh, & Abrams, 2004), International Prostatic Symptoms Score (IPSS, Barry, Fowler, O'Leary, Bruskewitz, Holtgrewe, Mebust, et al., 1992), and the International Index of Erectile Function (IIEF, Rosen, Riley, Wagner, Osterloh, Kirkpatrick, e Mishra, 1997), in order to investigate the presence of prostatic symptoms and related dysfunctions. Female participants answered to the Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI, Rosen, Brown, Heiman, Leiblum, Meston, Shabsigh, Ferguson, et al., 2000), in order to investigate their sexual function.

Results: High levels of anxiety were found in members of all couples, especially in asymptomatic patients and patients with a normal erectile function. A slight correlation was found between urinary incontinence and relational problems. Participants claimed that the disease had strengthened their bond. Sexual and relational satisfaction appear to be correlated.

Conclusions: Some unexpected and interesting results were found, especially when considering how sexuality can be malleable and independent from our physical condition. However, this research has a very limited sample, and only investigates pre-surgery anxieties and expectations. A test-retest study with a larger sample could give a wider range of results, possibly aiding to the creation of a standard information protocol.

Key Words: prostatectomy, sexual health, psycho-oncology, sexual dysfunction, sexual rights.

Funding Sources: None.