



Confidence-robbing condition compromising mental wellbeing of one-in-three Aussie men aged 40+: new research

Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia championing men's ED awareness campaign

One-in-three Aussie men aged 40+ years report¹ experiencing a confidence-robbing condition² that is severely compromising their mental health and wellbeing, new research reveals.²⁻⁴

A common side-effect of prostate cancer treatment,^{1,5} and other underlying medical conditions – diabetes, heart and blood vessel disorders, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol⁶⁻⁸ – erectile dysfunction, or “ED,” affects 5 per cent of South Australian men aged 40+ at least once a month,² and 27 per cent at least once a week.²

Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand (USANZ) President, Professor Helen O'Connell AO, Melbourne, said an underlying medical condition is often the root cause of ED, reinforcing the need for men to seek treatment.^{7,9}

“Recognising early signs of ED is critical. ED symptoms can often present as the first sign of metabolic diseases, cardiovascular disease (disorders of the heart and blood vessels), high blood pressure, or high cholesterol.⁶⁻⁸ Stress is also a risk factor for ED.¹⁰

Eighty per cent of ED cases occur due to compromised blood vessels.¹¹ Men living with diabetes are at heightened risk of developing ED because of damage caused to blood vessels and nerves due to the disease,⁷ with almost two-in-three developing ED,”^{7,12} said Prof O'Connell.

“ED is also a common complication of prostate cancer, and its treatment.¹³ For some men, it can take up to two years or longer post-treatment to regain sexual function.”^{1,14,15}

According to Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia's Chief of Mission and Head of Research, Professor Jeff Dunn AO, ED affects many Australian men and is a potential side-effect of treatment for our nation's most commonly diagnosed male cancer – prostate cancer.^{1,5,16-18}

“Prostate cancer is a major threat to the health of Australian men, with one in five men likely to be diagnosed in their lifetime.¹⁹

“Erectile dysfunction is one of the more common potential side-effects of prostate cancer treatment and affects between 25-75 per cent of men who undergo surgery for the disease,”²⁰ said Prof Dunn.

“Helping men, and their partners, adjust to common, physical side-effects of prostate cancer treatment, including ED,^{13,21} is crucial to optimising patient care and support, particularly because ED can significantly affect quality of life.^{3,22,23}

“In fact, most men report their quality of life to be severely, or moderately affected by ED following prostate cancer treatment,”²³ Prof Dunn said.

“For those men who have been diagnosed and treated for prostate cancer, and are dealing with ED, access to evidence-based support is imperative.”

Urological Surgeon, Ashford Hospital and Burnside War Memorial Hospital, Dr Dan Spernat, Adelaide, said 52 per cent of South Australian men who have experienced ED, describe the condition as “frustrating”, while 21 per cent claim it is “depressing.”²

ED can lead to shame, frustration and compromised mental health, including depression. It can even influence a man's view of himself as 'complete or whole.'^{3,4,24-26}

"The new research reveals 71 per cent of South Australian men who have experienced ED, feel the condition robs them of intimacy with their partner, 38 per cent reported it strains their relationship, while 58 per cent reported it reduces relationship satisfaction with their partner,"² said Dr Spernat.

"This does not however, need to be the case. There are many effective treatment options available to men living with ED."^{13,25}

"Timely and effective treatment for ED is crucial, because the longer the condition continues, the more complicated it can be to treat,"²⁷ Dr Spernat said.

"I encourage anyone living with ED to speak up and seek help."

Founder and Chair of the Prostate Cancer Help Association Inc. [PCaHELP](#), father, grandfather, and business owner, Ken, 70, Perth, was diagnosed with ED following prostate cancer surgery in September 2013. Ken's condition created many physical and mental "roadblocks" for him, and over time, thrust him into anxiety and depression.

"When I learned I would never regain sexual function, I was shattered. I thought my life was over and was very concerned about my future.

"However, the biggest challenge of living with ED was mental. Despite surviving prostate cancer, developing ED following prostate cancer treatment, was totally devastating," said Ken.

Ken spent three years trialling a plethora of ED treatment options, each of which offered him only short-term relief. As each treatment attempt failed, Ken's frustration and desperation began to spiral. In 2016, he visited a urological specialist for further professional advice.

"Eventually, four years after my prostate cancer surgery, I found an ED treatment option that worked for me. It changed my life completely," Ken said.

Given his experience of living with prostate cancer and ED, Ken founded the not-for-profit, WA-based association, [PCaHELP](#), to support men, and their families, during and following treatment. Today he has a simple, but poignant message for other Australian men living with ED.

"Help is available. All you have to do is ask. There are many brilliant doctors and various treatment options out there."

To learn more about the symptoms, management and treatment of ED, visit your doctor without delay, or head to: performatyourpeak.com.au.

About YouGov market research

Boston Scientific commissioned YouGov to perform an online quantitative survey on ED involving a nationally representative sample of 1,017 Australian men aged 40+ years between July 5 - 10, 2024. The data was weighted by age and region to reflect the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population estimates of Australian men aged 40+ years.

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