

A/PROF PRUE CORMIE – EXERCISE THERAPY

Men with prostate cancer experience increased rates of mental health issues. They are twice as likely to experience depression and have a 2-4 times greater risk of suicide than men of a similar age without prostate cancer.

Current health care services are failing to adequately address these issues as more than half of prostate cancer patients report unmet needs for psychological support. This is despite the tendency for men to be self-reliant and refute or not recognise the need for help in coping with psychological distress.

These data indicate a gap in knowledge surrounding optimal strategies to promote mental health following prostate cancer and raise two important questions: 1) how can men's mental health be promoted and psychological distress be effectively managed?; and 2) how do you get men to engage in effective management strategies?

As such, this project explores the efficacy of a targeted exercise intervention as a mental health care service – specifically 'Exercise Therapy'. This unique approach to delivering mental health care services is proposed to facilitate engagement by men through a gender-sensitive and specific intervention that is tailored to prostate cancer patients.

We theorise that a the Exercise Therapy intervention will appeal to men with prostate cancer as the type and delivery style of the service are linked to masculine values and may affirm self-esteem in men. This approach may help to counteract common perceptions of the nature and need for supportive care services as feminine.

Knowledge gained from this work has the potential to contribute to shaping best practice guidelines for the management of mental health issues among men with prostate cancer.

