

Can Women Get Prostate Cancer?

34 per cent of Canadians confuse prostate cancer as a disease that can affect both men and women

TORONTO Sept 17, 2012: According to a recent Leger Marketing poll, 14 per cent of Canadians believe women can be diagnosed with prostate cancer, and an additional 20 per cent aren't sure. Only 56 per cent know with certainty that men are the only ones who can be afflicted.

September 17th to 23rd is Prostate Cancer Awareness Week. The survey findings demonstrate that continued, basic prostate cancer education is still a critical need among many Canadians. "It is clear that people are still confused about the disease," said Aaron Bacher, Immediate Past Chairman of Prostate Cancer Canada Network – Toronto (PCCN-Toronto). "As the most common cancer affecting Canadian men, we need to be clear on what the disease is, the importance of being screened, early detection, and what the treatment options are once a diagnosis is made."

Understanding Prostate Cancer

1. **Prevalence:** Prostate cancer is the most common cancer to affect Canadian men – one in seven will develop the disease in their lifetime (an estimated 26,500 will be diagnosed in 2012)ⁱ, similar to the incidence of breast cancer in women (an estimated 22,700 will be diagnosed in 2012).ⁱⁱ Thirty-six per cent of Canadians are unaware of these statistics and 33 per cent believe that more women get breast cancer than men get prostate cancer.
2. **Causes:** While it remains unclear what causes prostate cancer, some risk factors may increase a man's risk of developing the disease:
 - a. **Older Age:** The risk of developing prostate cancer increases with age and is most common in men over 65.ⁱⁱⁱ Forty-four per cent of respondents, however, believe that men are most likely to be in their 40s at the time of diagnosis.
 - b. **Race:** Prostate cancer is more common in men of African or Caribbean descent, and less common in men of Asian descent.^{iv}
 - c. **Family history:** Those with a family history of prostate cancer may be at a higher risk of developing the disease.^v Sixty-nine per cent of respondents either disagreed or didn't know that there is a hereditary link to prostate cancer.
 - d. **Diet:** A low-fibre, high-fat diet puts men at a higher risk of prostate cancer.^{vi} Seventy per cent of survey respondents either disagreed or didn't know that there is a link between prostate cancer and diet.
3. **Diagnosis:** Since prostate cancer can develop in men with no risk factors, PSA blood tests and digital rectal examinations are available to help detect cancer early. Eighty-seven per cent of Canadians agreed that men should be tested regularly.
4. **Treatment:** If detected and treated in its earliest stages, a man's chances of survival can be greatly increased.^{vii} Eighty-seven per cent of respondents believe that prostate cancer is treatable and 74 per cent agree that it is curable.

Dealing with Prostate Cancer

The survey also probed Canadians' perceptions of what would be the most difficult things to deal with if confronted with a diagnosis of prostate cancer. Men, thinking about having prostate cancer themselves, and women, thinking about their partner or a loved one, were closely aligned in their responses. In fact, each group ranked worrying/losing hope, knowing my illness has an impact on my loved ones and my children, and being unable to access the best or new treatments as their projected top three stresses.

"We need to remember," says Bacher, "that beyond the physical disease, prostate cancer can have a profound emotional impact on both the patient and their family. Understanding the emotional struggle of the patient's whole team, so to speak, is essential to understanding and helping them along their prostate cancer journey."

"Ignorance and fear are often barriers to men being diligent and honest about their health," explains Dr. Luc Valiquette, M.D., FRCS (C), Director, Department of Surgery, Urologic Surgery Specialist, Université de Montréal. "In the case of prostate cancer, it may be especially difficult for a patient to communicate what they are feeling or what they need. It is reassuring, looking at these survey results, to see that men and women seem to instinctively identify and appreciate the same challenges. In fact, emotional supports can be as important as medical ones."

About Prostate Cancer Canada Network – Toronto

PCCN-Toronto is a volunteer based, non-profit prostate cancer support group, run by prostate cancer survivors who help men diagnosed with this disease. (www.pccntoronto.ca)

About the Research

The survey was completed online by Leger marketing from July 30, 2012 to August 1, 2012 with a sample of 1500 Canadians. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20. The survey was funded by Astellas Pharma Canada, Inc (www.astellas.ca).

For more information about the omnibus survey, or to speak with someone about the content of this release, please contact:

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ⁱ http://www.cancer.ca/Canadawide/About%20cancer/Cancer%20statistics/Stats%20at%20a%20glance/Prostate%20cancer.aspx?sc_lang=en

ⁱⁱ http://www.cancer.ca/Canada-wide/About%20cancer/Cancer%20statistics/Stats%20at%20a%20glance/Breast%20cancer.aspx?sc_lang=en

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/prostate-cancer/DS00043/DSECTION=causes>

^{iv} <http://www.prostatecancer.ca/Prostate-Cancer/A---Answering-Your-Questions/The-Basics>

^v <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/prostate-cancer/DS00043/DSECTION=risk-factors>

^{vi} <http://www.prostatecancer.ca/Prostate-Cancer/A---Answering-Your-Questions/The-Basics>

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