

SEXUAL MEDICINE REVIEWS

Predictors of Patient and Partner Satisfaction Following Radical Prostatectomy

Cailey Guercio, BS, and Akanksha Mehta, MD, MS

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer adversely affects the physical and emotional well-being of patients and partners and has been associated with sexual dysfunction in patients and their intimate partners.

Aim: To identify predictors of sexual satisfaction in prostate cancer survivors and their partners based on a review of the current literature.

Methods: We performed a comprehensive review of the PubMed database from January 2000 to May 2017 focused on the (i) prevalence of patient and partner sexual dysfunction related to radical prostatectomy, (ii) differences in patient and partner perspectives of sexual function and dysfunction, and (iii) predictors of patient and partner sexual satisfaction after radical prostatectomy.

Main Outcome Measures: Patient- and partner-reported sexual satisfaction.

Results: There is a paucity of published data examining sexual satisfaction in prostate cancer survivors and their partners. Patients and partners can have different expectations of sexual outcomes after radical prostatectomy and different attitudes toward the relative importance of recovery of sexual function after surgery. Available data suggest that patients' and partners' mental and physical health and the quality of communication between them are important contributors to their sexual satisfaction. Patient-perceived partner support also is associated with better patient-reported erectile function and greater relationship satisfaction.

Conclusion: Mental health, physical health, quality of interpersonal communication, and patient-perceived partner support appear to be the most important predictors of sexual satisfaction for patients and partners in the post-prostatectomy period. There is a definite need for further research on this topic to develop interventions to improve sexual function and quality of life for prostate cancer survivors and their intimate partners. **Guercio C, Mehta A. Predictors of Patient and Partner Satisfaction Following Radical Prostatectomy. Sex Med Rev 2017;X:XXX–XXX.**

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Key Words: Sexual Dysfunction; Sexual Satisfaction; Prostate Cancer; Radical Prostatectomy; Sexual Partners; Spouses

INTRODUCTION

Erectile dysfunction (ED) has meaningful biological, psychological, and social effects on the quality of life of affected individuals and their sexual partners. Of men undergoing radical prostatectomy (RP), the estimated prevalence of ED varies from 50% to 80%, depending on how ED is defined, when in the postoperative period it is measured, and how successfully it is treated.^{1–3} Untreated ED can cause frustration, anxiety, and

depression for patients and partners, potentially culminating in separation and/or divorce.^{4–6} Prostate cancer survivors and their partners are especially at risk for these undesirable outcomes.

The goal of treatment of ED is achievement of a satisfactory sex life for couples engaged in sexual relationships. Understanding the predictors of sexual satisfaction for patients and partners is essential for achieving this overall goal. Demographic factors, such as age, clinical factors, such as overall health, relationship and psychological factors, and sexual function have been shown to be critical predictors of sexual and relationship satisfaction in the general population.⁷

A growing body of literature supports the use of sexual partner-engaged approaches to assist ED treatment and rehabilitation.⁸ Partner involvement in the evaluation and treatment of

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Department of Urology, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA, USA

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ED results in increased adherence to ED rehabilitation and treatment, improved sexual function, and better relationship satisfaction for the patient and the partner.⁸ Furthermore, patients' and partners' sexual function are correlated. According to a study by Jiann et al,⁹ women whose partners were affected by ED scored lower on the Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) than women whose partners did not have ED. Thus, it is likely that a failure to address female sexual function and sexual satisfaction ultimately leads to a failure in adequately treating the male patient.

That said, the sexual history, goals, and expectations of the female partner are often overlooked. Discussion of sexual function is not a comfortable topic for patients, partners, and physicians alike. Sex of the physician has been shown to independently affect the frequency with which a sexual history is obtained from the female partner of a patient with ED and how detailed that history is.¹⁰ As a result, much of the published literature discussing the etiology, prevalence, and treatment of ED excludes the female partner altogether.

It is evident that partners play a critical role in the sexual recovery of prostate cancer survivors by providing emotional and logistical support.¹¹ Partners' sexual interest has been shown to be important for patients' recovery of sexual function.¹² In addition, partners' level of depression is predictive of the patients' relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and perceived quality of communication.¹³ However, our understanding of the partner's role with respect to survivorship care remains incomplete. There are still gaps in our knowledge about how important erectile function and sexual recovery are to partners, what the determinants of sexual satisfaction are in partners, and how sexual satisfaction correlates between patients and their partners after treatment for prostate cancer.

This goal of this study was to evaluate the published literature to identify known predictors of patient and partner sexual satisfaction after radical prostatectomy (RP), with the understanding that predictors of patients might differ from those of their partners.

METHODS

We performed a comprehensive review of the PubMed database from January 2000 to May 2017 focused on the (i) prevalence of patient and partner sexual dysfunction related to RP, (ii) differences in patient and partner perspectives of sexual function and dysfunction, and (iii) predictors of patient and partner sexual satisfaction after RP.

Specifically, the following search terms were used: "radical prostatectomy AND sexual satisfaction," "radical prostatectomy AND sexual recovery," and "radical prostatectomy AND sexual function AND partner OR spouse." Full-length original studies and review articles published in the English language that addressed patient and partner sexual function were considered in the preparation of this report (Figure 1).

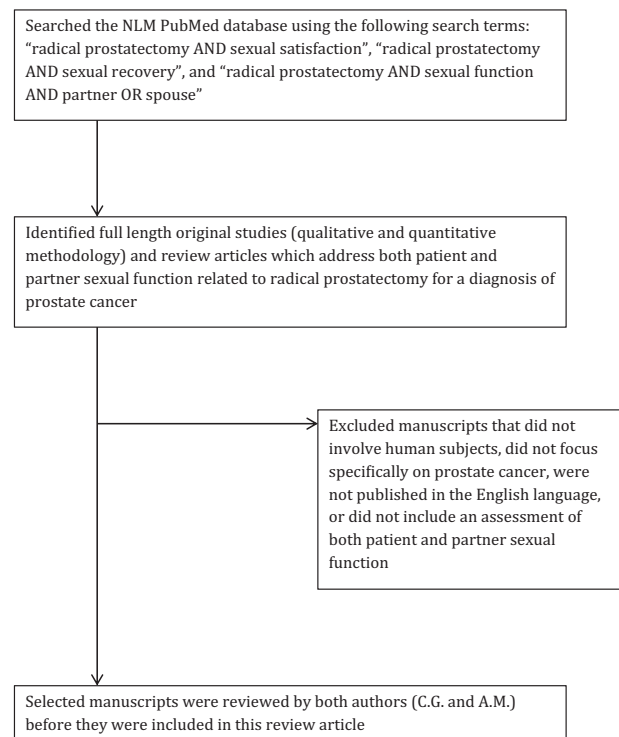


Figure 1. Overview of search criteria for identification and selection of published literature for the preparation of this review article.

RESULTS

There are a limited number of studies examining the impact of post-prostatectomy sexual dysfunction on the partners of prostate cancer survivors. The studies that do exist focus primarily on married heterosexual couples and provide little to no insight on the experiences of unmarried or same-sex partners. Many of these studies are qualitative analyses only; few involve quantitative analyses, performed using different validated instruments (Table 1). The studies used in the preparation of this review, and referenced below, are presented in Table 2.

Prevalence of Patient and Partner Sexual Dysfunction

Sexual dysfunction is the most common health-related quality-of-life complaint in prostate cancer survivors and includes not only ED but also decreased libido, impaired arousal, and muted orgasm.¹⁴ Partners of prostate cancer survivors likewise report a negative impact on their sexual function and sexual relationships. In a prospective study of 88 patient-partner pairs undergoing treatment for localized prostate cancer, the proportion of partners reporting problems with their sexual relationship increased substantially from 51% to 71% 6 to 12 months after treatment.¹⁵ In contrast, a minority of partners reported significant negative effects in other areas involving their relationship, work, or personal activities. Interestingly, partners were significantly more likely to report that their sexual relationship was worse when the

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