

Symptom cluster in men with castrate resistant prostate cancer

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To the Editor:

Men with metastatic castrate resistant prostate cancer (CRPC) experience significant physical and mental health morbidity along with impaired quality of life (QoL).¹ Pain related to skeletal metastases is the predominant physical symptom, but patients also suffer fatigue and drowsiness. On average, each prostate cancer patient has a median of four clinically relevant symptoms (defined as $\geq 4/10$ on the Edmonton Symptom Assessment Scale (ESAS)).² Treatment related symptoms may also occur such as loss of libido, hot flashes, depression, osteoporosis, fatigue, weight gain, erectile dysfunction and cognitive impairment with hormone suppression.

Patients rarely present with a single symptom and the importance of evaluating multiple symptoms, has been recognised.³ The concept of a symptom cluster has been defined as two or more co-occurring and interrelated symptoms that are independent of other symptoms or symptom clusters. The co-occurrence of symptoms has shown to amplify the symptom burden in a multiplicative rather than an additive way. Moreover, responding to symptoms in isolation may lead to inappropriate treatment.⁴

Previous studies exploring symptom clusters in prostate cancer, have focused on patients with early stage disease or adverse events of treatment^{5,6}. . The aim of this pilot study was to determine the presence of any symptom clusters in a cohort of men with advanced castrate resistant prostate cancer over time.

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