Invasive Prostate Cancer Treatments Make Men More Likely to Use Antidepressants

Researchers from the University of Toronto analyzed over 12,000 men with early-stage prostate cancer and found that men who have received invasive or damaging treatments like surgery or radiation are more likely to use antidepressants. 4,952 men who had surgery, 4,994 got radiation and 2,136 men chose to wait and watch their diagnosis. When researchers contrasted each treatment method to a control group, those who were subject to radiation were 33 percent more likely to be on anti-depressants 5 years later. Those who underwent surgery were 49 percent more likely to take anti-depressants. Those who did nothing showed no significant change in anti-depressant use. Dr. Robert Nam is the senior author of the study.

> *Once they receive treatment for prostate cancer, whether that is surgery or radiation, they may experience treatment-related side effects, such as erectile dysfunction, incontinence, and bowel dysfunction, which can significantly worsen quality of life…"*

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The System

The United States is currently engaged in a discussion of what health care should be in this country. Articles and analysis frequently mention how much the U.S. spends in relation to how poor health outcomes are in comparison to other developed nations. More Americans are waking up to the idea that more

treatment is not better treatment. Intervention begets more intervention. In this study, those who followed surgery or radiation treatment recommendations were more likely to receive anti-depressant scripts.

Even worse, some of the prostate cancer cases treated with surgery or radiation didn't need any intervention. One of the ways doctors monitor and diagnose prostate cancer is by measuring levels of prostate-specific antigen (PSA). An increase in those levels in a patient with prostate cancer alerts caregivers to disease progression, but studies have found that PSA levels in healthy men aren't a reliable indicator of prostate cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute,

> *Most men with an elevated PSA level turn out not to have prostate cancer; only about 25% of men who have a prostate biopsy due to an elevated PSA level actually are found to have prostate cancer when a biopsy is done."*

Prostate Cancer on the Rise

The "wait and see" method of dealing with prostate cancer is only practiced when the cancer is in its earliest stages. For those hoping to avoid radiation or surgery, that could be bad. Prostate cancer is on the rise among younger men and many cases are aggressive. Which means more intervention. How much is too much?

Sources:

- *Prostate cancer surgery and radiation tied to antidepressant use* – Reuters
- *Variation and Trends in Antidepressant Prescribing for Men Undergoing Treatment for Nonmetastatic Prostate Cancer: A Population-based Cohort Study* – European Urology

- *Is Prostate Cancer on the Rise?* – Men’s Journal
- *Overdiagnosis: when finding cancer can do more harm than good* – Cancer Research U.K.