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The psychological impact of early prostate cancer: A prospective evaluation

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Introduction & Objectives: Early prostate cancer is often considered as being associated with a good prognosis and quality of life. However, early prostate cancer research mainly focus on its medical aspects, rarely considering its psychological impact. We aimed to prospectively analyze the correlation between illness perception, quality of life (QOL) and psychological distress among prostate cancer patients, in comparison to healthy controls.

Materials & Methods: Early prostate cancer patients and healthy controls were prospectively recruited through convenience sampling. Participants filled questionnaires of demographic, illness perception (IPQ-R), QOL (MOS SF-36) and anxiety and depression (HADS). We compared the illness perception, QOL and psychological distress between patients and healthy controls.

Results: 51 early prostate cancer patients and 65 healthy men controls were included. Median age was 69. Patients and healthy participants differed in illness perception ['consequences' ($p<.001$), 'emotional representations' ($p<.001$)] and psychological distress ($p<.01$). There was a correlation between the patient illness perception and QOL ($p<.05$) and psychological distress ($p<.05$). Among patients, the correlation between psychological distress and QOL was mediated by illness perception ($p<.05$), while it was not among controls.

Conclusions: Diagnosis of early prostate cancer may have a psychological impact. Among early prostate cancer patients, a correlation may exist between illness perception, and quality of life (QOL) and psychological distress. Our results emphasize the need to identify patient distress and to implement therapeutic interventions also in a disease which usually is associated with a good prognosis.