

The STEP Study

Structured Educational programme to Support Men with Prostate Cancer, a study by East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre

Defending the Rights of Cancer Patients.

- A study carried by East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support in collaboration with a team of healthcare professionals, which sought men at pre-prostate surgery to participate in a new study.
- This study will investigate whether receiving a five-part intervention prior to receiving a prostatectomy is better for men than not receiving it.
- The pre-treatment intervention will involve
 - physiotherapy for the pelvic floor muscles
 - consultation with a continence advisor
 - instruction on how to use a vacuum pump for penile rehabilitation
 - a consultation with a sex therapist
 - consultation with a psychotherapist.

How STEP began.

- STEP began after we noticed that men coming to our centre with a prostate cancer diagnosis were not being given adequate support before or after their prostatectomy. Women when diagnosed with breast cancer, on the other hand, receive a large amount of support; varying from a massive amount of information, support groups and recovery aids.
- Prostate cancer is a couple's disease. The side effects of prostate cancer can often lead to a breakdown in relationships. Our study not only focuses on the physical impact of a diagnosis but the impact on relationships and the psychological impact of prostate cancer.
- Men's cancer care has long lagged behind that of women's. In comparison to women with a diagnosis of breast cancer, men with prostate cancer receive little or no information or support on things such as penile rehabilitation and continence issues. The STEP Study, for us, is about standing up for men's cancer rights to be equal to those of women's cancers.
- Men with a prostate cancer diagnosis are often not vocal about their experience and many suffer embarrassment when talking about their treatment. Our aim is to make support readily available for both the men suffering with prostate cancer and their partners and families experiencing this journey with them.

STEP So Far...

- STEP begins with a questionnaire and participants are asked to fill out this questionnaire a total of three times: before their treatment, three months after their treatment and six months after the treatment.
- This questionnaire asks the participant about their symptoms before their treatment and about the impact of the prostate cancer diagnosis on them and their quality of life. It also asks if the participant has had any education or support prior to their treatment.
- In order for this to be an accurate study, half the men taking part will not receive intervention while the other half will. At the end of the study the results from both groups will be compared and analysed and a report published.
- At the moment, the catchment area of our study is quite small. It is confined to the area surrounding East Galway and Midland Cancer Support Centre. Our ultimate aim would be to roll this out to a much larger European audience in the hopes of bringing men's cancer to the fore.