

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF CANCER OF THE PROSTATE ON INDIVIDUALS, 60 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER, AND ON THEIR FAMILIES

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Cancer of the prostate is a growing concern in both developed and developing countries due to the escalation of the incidence of prostate cancer in recent years. Researchers have identified it as the first or second most common cause of cancer in males in Western countries today. Since age, race, and family history of the disease are recognized risk factors, and since Jamaica is facing the reality of a larger aging population, cancer of the prostate is an issue with public health significance. Prognosis for cure is good with early detection and treatment.

An analytical study was done using a pre-tested, 40 item questionnaire which was specifically designed for this study. Between March 27, and April 18, 1997, all the patients with the diagnosis of prostate cancer who attended the two major Urology clinics in the Kingston and St. Andrew area plus patients from three doctors' offices, also in this area, were used as the sample for a total of 33.

The data analysis was done using the Epi Info programme and was presented by tables, figures, and narration.

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of prostate cancer on, and coping mechanisms used by, individuals 60 years of age and older, and their families, also to identify availability of community support resources.

The study found the number of respondents increased with age. The high cost of health care created an economic burden as most were retired and on fixed incomes. The need for assistance with activities of daily living increased with the duration of the illness. Many expressed feelings of depression and helplessness. Their main coping mechanism was reliance on their doctor for treatment and medication.

Cancer of the prostate impinges on the quality of life of our vulnerable aging male population and their families. It threatens their social, economic, and psychological well-being by increasing the strain placed on their limited resources, and the untoward complications of treatment such as urinary incontinence and impotency.