

# Non-High School Graduates Especially At Risk For Lower Quality Of Life After Prostate Cancer Treatment

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Non-High School Graduates Especially At Risk For Lower Quality Of Life After Prostate Cancer Treatment

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Among men who have received similar treatments for prostate cancer, those with less education – particularly those who did not graduate from high school – experience a significant drop in their quality of life after treatment compared with men who have more education, according to a study led by researchers at the San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC).

"These men did not start out with a lower quality of life before cancer," says lead author Sara J. Knight, PhD, a staff psychologist at SFVAMC. "What's surprising is that after treatment, they have clinically significant problems across the board – mental and emotional as well as physical – in managing their lives."

The authors acknowledge that low educational level is often associated with lower income, which can lead to lower quality of life, but stress that for the men in their study, low education alone was associated with lower quality of life, irrespective of income. "In our analysis, it's their lower educational level that has made them more vulnerable to the effects of prostate cancer and its treatment," says Knight, who is also an assistant professor of psychiatry and urology at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF).

The paper is available in the on-line Early View section of the journal *Cancer*.

The researchers analyzed the results of a self-reported quality-of-life survey completed by 248 patients who were diagnosed with prostate cancer between 1989 and 2002 and treated at three Veterans Affairs medical centers. Treatments included surgery, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, and observation or "watchful waiting."

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After adjusting for a host of factors including severity and stage of cancer, treatment, age, education, income, marital status, and other diseases, the researchers found that men without high school diplomas "experienced greater decline and less recovery" during the first year after prostate cancer treatment across a wide variety of domains, including physical, emotional, and social functioning, vitality, mental health, general health, urinary function, and sexual function.

"More generally, the lower your educational level, the greater the likelihood that you would have a lower quality of l