The Symptom Recognition and Help-Seeking Experiences of Men in Australia with Testicular Cancer: A Qualitative Pilot Study

Abstract:

Aims: Testicular cancer affects approximately 550 men in Australia each year. Early intervention has the potential to reduce the burden of disease and to improve the health outcomes of those experiencing this serious disease. Achieving this outcome requires a strong understanding of the factors that influence help-seeking.

Method: In the current qualitative retrospective pilot study, the symptom-recognition and help-seeking experiences of 11 men aged between 28-44 years who had undergone treatment for testicular cancer were examined.

Results and Discussion: Analysis of the semi-structured telephone interview data indicated that most men sought help early, and were treated promptly. A few men, however, described prolonged help-seeking delays. The factors implicated in help-seeking delays included lack of knowledge about testicular cancer; initial misattribution of symptoms; slowly progressing or low severity symptoms; a busy lifestyle; embarrassment about having a genital examination; and a fear of orchidectomy and its potential threat to masculinity. However, there was only limited evidence to support the notion that men delayed help-seeking out of concern about appearing weak or non-masculine.

Further research using quantitative methodology and with a larger sample size is required to determine the relative importance of these various factors on help-seeking delays.