Talking About Men's Health

Male Cancers

USDAW

Why Men's Health?

Men have been notoriously poor at looking after themselves, never more so than when it comes to cancer. Men are far less likely than women to use primary healthcare services, and are often reluctant to seek help until they have poor health. However, men are more likely than women to both develop and die from the 10 most common cancers affecting both sexes.

This leaflet is designed to raise men's awareness of the importance of maintaining their health, particularly when it comes to cancer. It highlights the two most common male-specific cancers and explains how to spot the early warning signs so you can get checked out.

Men with cancer may well need the support of their Usdaw rep and of their employer. In some cases men with cancer can find themselves caught up in absence management schemes which do not take account of their condition. The leaflet therefore also sets out what reps and employers can do to help men with cancer.

In this leaflet we look at the two most common forms of male specific cancers, testicular and prostate, and how Usdaw reps can make a difference at work for men living with cancer.

Men are much more reluctant than women to visit their GP about health problems. This means the workplace can be a good way of reaching men with information and guidance about cancer.

Testicular Cancer

Early detection is the key to successfully treating cancer. Testicular cancer is one of the most treatable of all cancers, with approximately 95% of men making a full recovery. The causes of testicular cancer are not fully understood, however it is thought that up to one in five men have an increased risk of developing it as a result of an inherited faulty gene. Unlike most cancers it is more common in young and middle-aged men, most commonly affecting men between the ages of 15 and 44. It is also more common in white men, compared with other racial groups. It is also more common in Northern and Western Europe than in any other part of the world.

The MOT

The most common symptom of testicular cancer is a lump or swelling in one testicle. However it is important to bear in mind that most testicular lumps are not a sign of cancer. Research has shown that less than 4% of testicular lumps are cancerous. Nevertheless this does not mean that you should ignore a lump or swelling.

Other symptoms can include:

- A dull ache or pain in your testicles or scrotum.
- A feeling of heaviness in your scrotum.
- A dull ache in your lower abdomen.
- A sudden collection of fluid in your scrotum.
- Generally feeling unwell.

If you do notice a lump or abnormality it is essential you first see your GP. Although most lumps are not cancerous, early diagnosis means a much more effective treatment if it proves to be otherwise.

The three main forms of treatment are surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Surgery is the most common and effective form of treatment and is normally the first line of treatment for all stages and types.

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is a form of cancer that develops in the prostate, a gland in the male reproductive system. It tends to develop in men over 50 and is one of the most prevalent types of cancer in men. Around one in eight men will develop prostate cancer at some point in their lives. In the UK, around 10,000 men die annually from the disease. It is not understood why, but African Caribbean men are three times more likely to get prostate cancer, whereas men of Asian descent are less likely than others.

One of the tricky situations is that early prostate cancer usually causes no clear symptoms. However, the most common symptoms include frequent urination, increased urination at night, difficulty starting and maintaining a steady stream of urination, blood in the urine and painful urination.

The specific causes of prostate cancer remain largely unknown. However, a man's risk of developing it is age-related and it occurs almost exclusively amongst men over 50. Other factors are genetics and race.

The MOT

The prostate is a small walnut-sized gland situated near the bladder. Tell-tale signs of a problem include difficulty in passing water and an increased frequency and/or pain when urinating.

There are three main types of prostate problem:

- Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH), which is an enlargement of the gland typical in older men.
- Prostatitis, which is an inflammation of the gland, can affect men at any age and is painful.
- And finally, actual prostate cancer.

As with testicular cancer, screening is essential, especially for catching it at its early stages. However, anyone who feels they may have the symptoms should visit their GP as soon as possible.

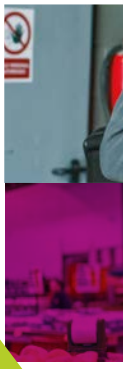
Role of the Workplace

The workplace can be helpful in reaching men with the right messages about cancer. Employers can help by making sure information about men's cancers is available at work. This should stress the age groups most at risk, the importance of self checking for symptoms and of going to the GP for advice. It makes sense for employers to do this. Helping to keep staff healthy is in the employer's interest. Employers may wish to publicise details of drop in centres that can give advice about male cancers and health promotion activity.

The Equality Act and Cancer

The Equality Act, and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in Northern Ireland, prevent employers from treating anyone who has cancer unfairly. From the moment a person is diagnosed as having cancer they are covered by the Acts, even if they are not yet experiencing any symptoms or undergoing medical treatment. The Acts also cover those who have been diagnosed with cancer in the past.

The Acts require employers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the workplace and to policies and procedures. This might mean allowing time off for treatment, changing a persons working hours or making adjustments to sickness absence policies to take account of any disability-related absence. For more information about how the Equality Act, or DDA in Northern Ireland, can help, get hold of a copy of Usdaw's Advice Guide *'Supporting Disabled Members'* (Leaflet 383).



Help and Support

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: **0808 808 00 00**, Mon-Fri, 8am to 8pm
web: **www.macmillan.org.uk**

Cancer Research UK

Tel: **0808 800 4040**, Mon-Fri, 9am to 5pm
email: **cancerresearchuk@cancer.org.uk**
web: **www.cancerresearchuk.org**

Prostate Cancer UK

Tel: **0800 074 8383**
web: **www.prostatecanceruk.org**

Orchid National Male Cancer Helpline

Helpline: **0808 802 0010**
email: **helpline@orchid-cancer.org.uk**
web: **www.orchid-cancer.org.uk**

Join Usdaw

You can join online at:
www.usdaw.org.uk/join

Scan to join today

What Happens Next

Once we process your application, you will receive a membership card with our Helpline telephone number and a New Member's Pack giving details of all the benefits and professional services available to you.

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Lft 461 April 2023
Stock photography, posed by models