

A qualitative exploration of physiotherapists' experiences working with people with prostate cancer in metropolitan and regional Victoria

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Physiotherapy service provision in prostate cancer can be optimised by geographically accessible professional development, a comprehensive public health system and a network of relationships within multidisciplinary teams.

1 Background

Treatment for prostate cancer is often curative but potentially accompanied by symptoms of bladder and bowel dysfunction, sexual dysfunction, pain, and morphological and metabolic changes¹⁻³. Physiotherapists are considered a vital part of the supportive care team⁴⁻⁵. Despite documented benefits, evidence of physiotherapists' experiences with service provision for people with prostate cancer is limited.

2 Aim

To explore physiotherapists' experiences with providing supportive care to people with prostate cancer in metropolitan and regional Victoria.

3 Methods

Two focus groups were conducted: One with metropolitan and the other with regional physiotherapists in Victoria, Australia. A reflexive thematic analysis approach was undertaken.

4 Results

Five metropolitan and **seven** regional Victorian physiotherapists participated. Five worked in public settings, three in private and four across both. All participants held post graduate qualifications in pelvic health physiotherapy and treated between one to > 20 patients with prostate cancer per month.

Three themes were identified:

Operation hours, wait lists, missed prehabilitation opportunities, workforce shortages > in regional areas.



Accessibility, financial/time burdens, skill specific training (e.g. Real time ultrasound), appetite for mentorship.

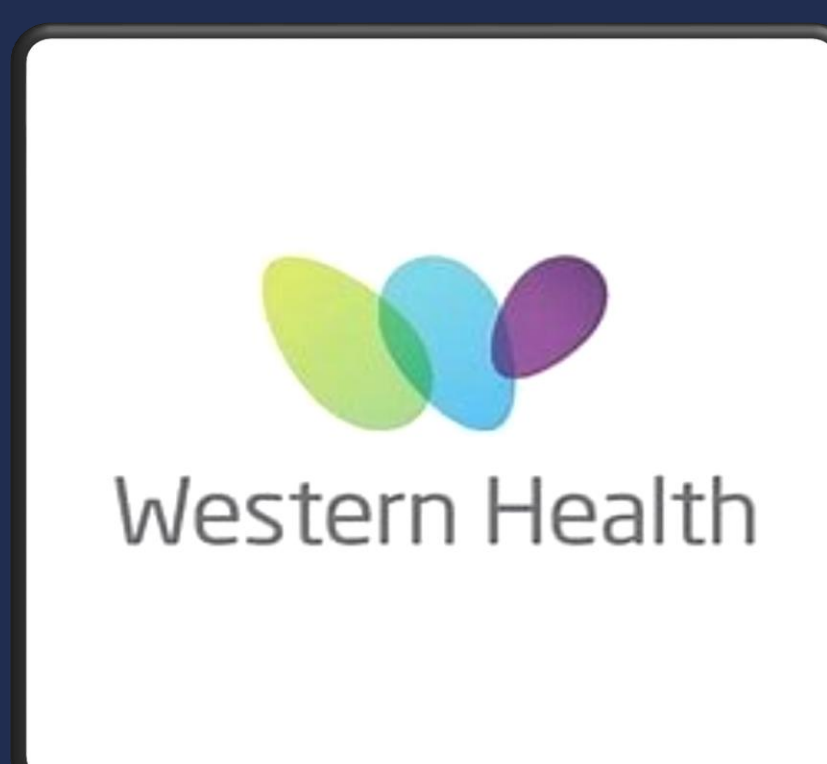
Timely/appropriate referrals, optimising coordinated care, facilitating value driven goals, promoting understanding of physiotherapy role.

Recommendations

1. Professional development should be accessible, affordable and delivered in a format that is geographically inclusive.
2. Mentorship structures should be considered.
3. Staff shortages and limited operational hours in the public system, particularly in regional areas, requires attention.
4. Physiotherapists should be incorporated as part of the multidisciplinary team.
5. Physiotherapy interventions need to be patient centred to meet individual lifestyle and occupational needs, particularly in regional areas.

References

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Feel free to share your experience working as a physiotherapist or with a physiotherapist.

Responses are voluntary, anonymous and not for research purposes.