

## CULTURAL BELIEFS MAY AFFECT HEALTH DECISIONS AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVORS

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**Purpose:** Prostate Cancer is a serious health problem among African American men. In 2003, an estimated 5,300 African American men died from prostate cancer, making it the second leading cause of cancer death in this population. Cultural beliefs appear to be an important determinant in treatment preference and cancer outcome, and may play a large role in the late stage diagnosing that is often the case in African American men. This study, which is in progress, seeks to identify cultural beliefs and attitudes concerning complementary and alternative products and practices (CAPPs) (e.g. herbs, roots, prayer, spirituality) in a sample of African American prostate cancer survivors.

**Method:** A mixed methods (qualitative/quantitative) research design is being used to explore attitudes and beliefs of African American prostate cancer survivors in Central Virginia regarding CAPPs use. Sample size will depend upon reaching “data saturation” (i.e., no new themes are generated). The primary investigator is using a semi-structured interview guide that contains open-ended, categorical, and quantitative questions to obtain views and attitudes of study participants. Content analysis is used to examine the responses to open-ended questions and thus identify recurring themes within the participants’ responses. .Data from the demographic and quantitative questions will be analyzed with descriptive statistics (using SPSS 12.0) to develop a profile of participants.

**Findings:** While the interview process is still underway, current themes that have emerged include concerns with God and prostate cancer and the relationship between the prostate cancer survivor and his partner. Although these African American men believed that they are somewhat religious, those interviewed to date have not express that God was the reason for them getting prostate cancer, yet they did express that God works through medical doctors to cure cancer. These men have expressed that their partners should be involved in their prostate health, although they noted that there was the possibility that one’s partner may leave the relationship because of the prostate cancer.

**Discussion:** The incidence of prostate cancer within the United States disproportionately affects African American men. Examining cultural beliefs as related to the use of CAPPs by African American men may provide valuable information for healthcare professionals to be aware of as they offer current allopathic treatments and talk about prostate cancer with patients in this vulnerable population.