

## **FEASIBILITY OF TELEPHONE INTERPERSONAL COUNSELING FOR MEN WITH PROSTATE CANCER AND THEIR PARTNERS**

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Background/Rationale: Major coping challenges for men with prostate cancer and their partners include mortality concerns, incontinence, and changes in sexual functioning. Interpersonal Counseling by telephone over a 6-week period was selected as a promising means of reducing depressive symptoms and improving quality of life in a population of older men with prostate cancer and their partners.

Purpose: To discuss methodological and ethical issues particular to telephone counseling research involving men with prostate cancer and their partners.

Previous Studies: Descriptive studies of the prevalence of depression among men with prostate cancer have yielded mixed results, suggesting that emotional distress is less problematic for this population as compared to women with breast cancer. There has been much less experimental research testing counseling, including telephone interventions, for prostate cancer patients as compared to interventions targeting breast cancer patients.

Special Issues With This Population: Men with advanced prostate cancer and their partners tend to be older than other cancer populations and to have significant comorbidities. Hearing difficulties and age-associated memory impairment may complicate telephone interactions. The willingness of older men with prostate cancer to engage in counseling on the telephone is called into question by some gender-specific perspectives on cancer coping.

Methods Used In This Study: This is an ongoing pilot clinical trial with repeated measures of depression and quality of life. Thirty men and their partners will be randomized to either the treatment or usual care condition. All data collections and counseling sessions are conducted over the telephone and tape-recorded with consent of study participants. To facilitate administration of questionnaires over the phone, participants are provided questionnaire scale cards to keep at home near the phone to promote ease and accuracy.

Challenges Associated With The Telephone Intervention Method: Because calls are typically made to participant's homes, participants not being home or home activities competing for attention are common problems encountered. Although the intervention entails separate confidential data collection and counseling sessions for men and partners, the older, retired couples are often present together when telephone contact is made.