

Working in partnership to develop an educational and supportive surgery school for our prostatectomy patients

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Introduction

Patients undergoing a radical prostatectomy (surgery to remove the prostate to treat prostate cancer) will experience life-changing side effects such as incontinence and erectile dysfunction (ED). These side effects can have a significant impact on their quality of life and their personal relationships.

During preoperative consultations with prostate patients it was found that some men were not receiving or retaining vital information about these side effects. For example, doing pelvic floor exercises (PFE) prior to surgery can help strengthen the muscle. If the muscle is strong it can recover sooner, this can help men to stop leaking urine sooner and help them to get or keep an erection (Prostate Cancer UK 2022).

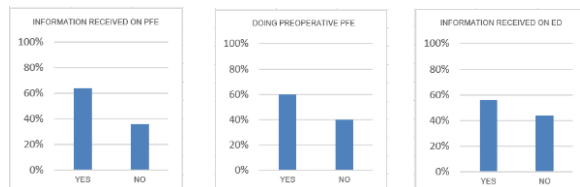
Additionally, Maggie's Manchester were seeing lower than average numbers of prostate cancer patients in their centre. Their data showed that only 4% of visitors using their centre between 2018 and 2021 had prostate cancer, the reference data suggest this should be 12%.

Not receiving fundamental information meant that many men, and their partners, were unprepared and did not access important resources that could provide support. The aim of the project was to improve information provision and connect people with Maggie's and the support they can provide.

Method

We surveyed 150 men to find out what information they were receiving preoperatively. We asked:

- Have you received any information about pelvic floor exercises? YES/NO
- Are you doing your pelvic floor exercises? YES/NO
- Have you received any information about erectile dysfunction? YES/NO



Of those that answered, 36% had not been given any information on PFE and how they help incontinence, 40% were not doing any PFE prior to surgery and 44% had not been given any information on ED.

We also asked:

- Would you attend a group physiotherapy session about pelvic floor exercises? YES/NO
- Would you attend a group teaching session to discuss the treatments available for erectile dysfunction? YES/NO

Of those that answered, 72% would attend a physiotherapy session and 62% would attend a session on treatments for ED.

Following the survey, we worked internally, with all members of the team working with prostatectomy patients and externally, with Maggie's Manchester, to create an informative teaching session.

The session aims are:

- What can I expect to happen whilst I am in hospital?
- What is a catheter and how will I look after it at home?
- What continence products are useful and where can I get them?
- What are pelvic floor exercises and how do I do them?
- Will I be able to get erections after the operation?
- What treatments are available to help me try and get my erections back?

PILOT

We ran a pilot session with some previous prostatectomy patients and feedback was positive. They commented, 'I wish there had been something like this when I had my surgery'. They also recommended we invite a previous patient to each session to share their experiences and offer support and advice.

We subsequently wrote to 50 previous patients and the response was overwhelming.



Sessions started in February 2022 and run twice a month. Each session is currently attended by five men and their partners (should they wish them to attend). Each session is also attended by a previous 'expert patient' who dedicates their time to help.

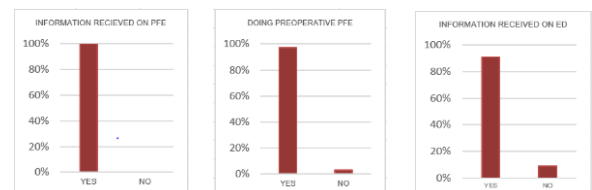
Maggie's Manchester provides us with a calming environment that enables people to relax and be more receptive. This is also a fantastic opportunity for Maggie's to introduce their support services and encourage future engagement.

Transport and interpreter services are provided for those in need.

Results

Out of 55 men invited, 53 have attended. Based on the survey we were expecting approximately a 70% acceptance rate. We have surpassed this at 96%.

We have surveyed those who have attended and have seen an improvement in responses:



Of those that answered, 100% had enough information on PFE, only 3% were not doing their PFE prior to surgery and 9% felt they have not been given enough information on ED.

We asked for comments and feedback on the session:

*'It made me confident as everything was discussed and explained'
'I'm more relaxed after meeting other patients and [the] staff made it a lot clearer'
'Taken from beginning to end of what to expect. Given reassurance and was reassuringly calming. Helped to relieve the stress I was feeling. Thank you.'*

We also asked for comments and feedback on the group support and 'expert patient':

*'It was reassuring to see others'
'I gained from their personal experience'
'I did not feel alone'*

In addition to these results and the positive feedback, Maggie's Manchester have seen positive outcomes. They have a clear increase in the numbers of people affected by prostate cancer accessing the centre, both in terms of general support and attendance at the prostate cancer support group. Representation is now at 9% and on an upwards trend.

Conclusion

The introduction of this 'surgery school' has benefitted our prostatectomy patients. The patient feedback has been positive and they have been grateful for the knowledge and support that the sessions provided. Survey results demonstrate that the patients are being proactive preoperatively with their PFE. Anecdotally, we have found that patients are more engaged with their recovery and are retaining information better. Postoperatively, we have found patients are more prepared for the side effects and they are engaging with support services sooner.

Maggie's have seen an increase in attendance which means more people can access the support they need. Additionally we are putting patients in touch with one another and creating valuable support networks for them.

Finally, the 'surgery school' has benefitted The Trust. Previously, much of this information was delivered on a one-to-one basis. Delivering group sessions saves healthcare professional time and allows us to focus the time on those that need it more.



References

Prostate Cancer UK (2022) 'Pelvic floor muscle exercises'. [online] available from <https://prostatecanceruk.org/prostate-information/living-with-prostate-cancer/pelvic-floor-muscle-exercises>

Acknowledgement Thank you to all of our previous patients for dedicating their time to help others and to all those who have attended for giving us their valuable feedback