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Study: ED Drugs Don't Increase Risk for Prostate Cancer Recurrence

New research suggests that oral drugs for erectile dysfunction (ED) don't increase a man's risk for biochemical recurrence of prostate cancer.

The term "biochemical recurrence" refers to the possibility that prostate cancer has come back after treatment. This occurs when a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test shows that PSA levels have increased. Elevated PSA levels are not always a sign of cancer, but they can warrant further testing.

Past research has raised concerns that ED medications called phosphodiesterase type 5 (PDE5) inhibitors - Viagra, Levitra, and Cialis - increase the risk of recurrence. These drugs are usually the first-line therapy for ED.

To learn more, scientists from Europe and the United States examined medical data from the National Prostate Cancer Register of Sweden linked to the Prescribed Drug Register. They identified men who had been treated for localized prostate cancer (confined to the prostate gland) and looked at 5 years of follow-up data.

Two hundred ninety-three men had biochemical recurrence after treatment with radical prostatectomy (surgical removal of the prostate gland) and radiation therapy. The researchers then gathered information from 5,767 men who did not have biochemical recurrence and compared the two groups.

PDE5 inhibitors were used by 51% of the men who experienced biochemical recurrence. Among men who didn't have a recurrence, 58% used these medications.

The research team found that using PDE5 inhibitors was not associated with biochemical recurrence for either type of treatment. Even after accounting for factors like marital status, education, income, PSA levels, and stage of cancer, there was still no connection.

The authors concluded that doctors do not need to change their approach to treating ED after prostate cancer treatment.

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The study was published online in December in the journal *European Urology*.

Resources

European Urology

Loeb, Stacy, et al.

“Phosphodiesterase Type 5 Inhibitor Use and Disease Recurrence After Prostate Cancer Treatment”

(Abstract. Published online: December 30, 2015)

[http://www.europeanurology.com/article/S0302-2838\(15\)01221-X/abstract/phosphodiesterase-type-5-inhibitor-use-and-disease-recurrence-after-prostate-cancer-treatment](http://www.europeanurology.com/article/S0302-2838(15)01221-X/abstract/phosphodiesterase-type-5-inhibitor-use-and-disease-recurrence-after-prostate-cancer-treatment)

National Cancer Institute

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Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Test”

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<http://www.cancer.gov/types/prostate/psa-fact-sheet#q1>

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Charnow, Jody A.

“Erectile Dysfunction Drugs Do Not Affect Prostate Cancer Relapse Risk”

(January 5, 2016)

<http://www.renalandurologynews.com/prostate-cancer/erectile-dysfunction-drugs-do-not-affect-prostate-cancer-relapse-risk/article/462750/>

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Boggs, Will, MD

“Erectile dysfunction meds don't boost prostate cancer recurrence”

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