

PROSTATE DISEASE: AN OVERVIEW

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men (besides non-melanoma skin cancer), with approximately 18,700 new cases diagnosed and about 3,000 deaths recorded in Australia each year.¹

Approximately 25% of men aged over 50 and 50% of men aged over 60 have evidence of cancerous cells in their prostate. However prostate cancer is not life threatening in many of these men. While this cancer can be aggressive and grow rapidly it can also be latent or slow growing and never spread outside the prostate gland.

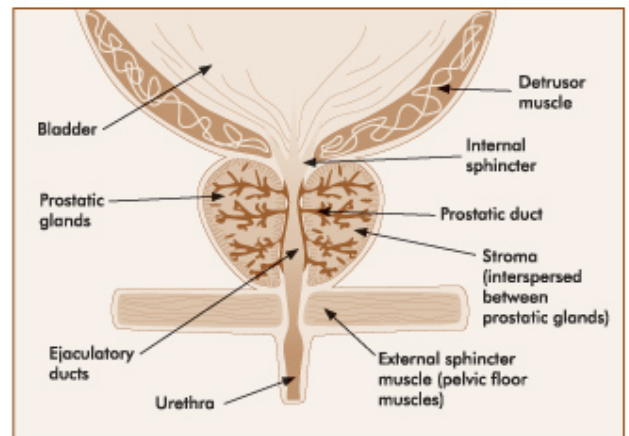
Benign prostate hyperplasia (BPH)²

Although sometimes described as a tumour, BPH is a non-cancerous or benign growth that is extremely common. Nearly every man aged over 50 is affected by BPH to some extent, and 90% of these men will experience discomfort and require treatment for the condition by the time they are 80 years old.

In this condition the prostate grows, causing the urethra to narrow and putting pressure on the bladder. This can affect the passing of urine in different ways:

- Urgent and frequent need to urinate day and night
- A delay or strain when starting to urinate
- Poor or dribbling flow of urine
- Dribbling after urination has finished
- Inability to pass all urine from the bladder, increasing the need to go more often

Other symptoms of BPH include an urgent feeling of needing to urinate, the need to pass urine more than twice a night, painful urination and blood in the urine.



Cross-section of the prostate gland Prostate enlargement (2005): Andrology Australia

Research Needed

Existing therapies for prostate cancer can be very invasive and may result in serious side-effects such as incontinence and impotence. Less severe treatments are urgently needed.

Furthermore current screening and diagnostic measures, including the PSA blood test and digital rectal examination (DRE) are unable to differentiate between slow and fast growing prostate cancer, which makes management of this disease uncertain. More precise and informative methods of diagnosis which could establish when treatment is required may prevent the need for radical and potentially debilitating treatment.

Several surgical options are currently available to address benign prostate disease, however these have varying degrees of success and repeat procedures are often required. Further understanding into the development of this disease will ideally assist in finding new ways to manage this debilitating condition.

¹ *Cancer in Australia: an overview, 2006* Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) June 2007. p 85

² *Prostate enlargement (2005):* Andrology Australia