

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Brain Fog and Prostate Cancer: Understanding It to Better Manage it

Speaker: Dr. Valérie Fraile, PhD, Neuropsychologist

Brain fog can affect concentration, memory, organization, and mental efficiency throughout the prostate cancer journey. This very real phenomenon can be linked to several factors, including treatments, fatigue, sleep, stress, and certain health conditions.

In this webinar, Dr. Fraile explains why these changes can occur, how they may affect everyday life, and which strategies can help reduce their impact. She also emphasizes the importance of discussing these changes with loved ones and the healthcare team to receive appropriate support and guidance.

1. Brain fog is real, common and multifactorial

Brain fog associated with cancer and its treatments is a very real phenomenon. It can affect attention, memory, word-finding ability, organization, and the speed at which information is processed.

The term "chemobrain" is too restrictive, as these difficulties can arise even before treatment begins, as early as the time of diagnosis, or in people who have never received chemotherapy. They can be linked to a range of biological, psychological, and functional factors.

In most cases, these changes are temporary: cognitive abilities have not necessarily disappeared; they may simply be less accessible for a period of time.

2. Some prostate cancer treatments can affect cognitive function

Several treatments can contribute to brain fog in different ways.

Hormone therapy, for example, can lead to lower testosterone levels, and this hormone plays a role in concentration, memory, and mental energy. Hot flashes associated with hormonal changes can also disrupt sleep and increase fatigue.

Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery can also have direct or indirect effects on cognitive function, particularly through fatigue, inflammation, or pain.

3. Several factors can worsen brain fog and some can be addressed

Fatigue, sleep problems, stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, pain, and certain other health conditions can act as significant “drains on attention and energy.”

Individual factors can also play a role, including age, lifestyle habits, and cognitive reserve—the brain’s ability to better withstand changes, supported in part by physical, intellectual, and social activity.

Identifying these different factors can help clarify what may be contributing to cognitive difficulties and make it possible to address those that can be modified.

4. The effects on everyday life are real, even when they are not always visible

Brain fog can affect independence, daily activities, returning to work, social life, and even the management of care, such as taking medications or keeping track of appointments.

Because these difficulties are often invisible, they may be misunderstood by others and can sometimes lead to frustration or isolation.

Cognitive concerns should be taken seriously, even when a neuropsychological assessment remains within normal limits. What also matters is the real impact these difficulties have on day-to-day functioning and quality of life.

5. There are ways to take action, and it is important to speak up early

Appropriate physical activity is one of the most effective ways to support cognitive function and reduce fatigue. A commonly suggested recommendation is approximately 30 minutes of physical activity three times a week, depending on each person’s abilities.

Other strategies can also help: maintaining healthy sleep habits, staying mentally and socially active, using a planner or reminders, establishing routines, focusing on one task at a time, reducing distractions, and taking breaks before fatigue becomes too significant.

Finally, it is essential to discuss any changes you notice with your loved ones and healthcare team as early as possible. The sooner these difficulties are recognized, the sooner appropriate strategies can be put in place to reduce their impact on everyday life.

RESOURCE

PROCURE's medical support line is free, confidential, and available 7 days a week. Nurses specialized in uro-oncology can answer your questions and direct you to the appropriate resources: **1-855-899-2873**.

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