

# Positive attitude improves mental health of testicular cancer patients

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**Washington, DC:** Men with testicular cancer who write positively about their experience show signs of improved mental health afterward, in contrast to men who write negatively or neutrally about their condition, according to results of a Baylor University pilot study.

Dr. Mark Morman, associate professor of communication studies and graduate program director at Baylor University, said: "There's a lot of research that takes this writing-based approach and in a number of varied contexts, but we applied this line of research to the testicular cancer context for the first time that we are aware of.

"We think writing about the experience could add to the therapy and can help with recovery and quality-of life issues after treatment, as the men try to get on with their lives."

In the study, 48 men were randomly divided into three groups, with one group assigned to write positively about their cancer experience; one group to write negatively; and one to write about innocuous, unrelated topics. The affect of the writing was measured at the beginning and end of the study, with men responding to 68 questions in which they assessed their mental health, general feeling of well-being, sexual health, and performance and traits of assertiveness and responsiveness.

Participants in the positive expression group reported improvements in their mental health as a result of their writing; those in the negative expression and neutral groups did not.

Testicular cancer is rare, most often striking men ages 18 to 30, and one of the most curable forms of cancer if detected early, according to the National Cancer Institute.

But articles in the Journal of Clinical Oncology cite findings that men with testicular cancer are more likely to be depressed or anxious. Side effects of chemotherapy or radiation treatment can interfere with sexual performance and fertility, although those conditions are usually temporary.

Nevertheless, "there are issues of masculinity, sexuality, relationships and self-image that often have significant effects on a survivor's ability to cope and move forward," said Morman, a former communication consultant for the Lance Armstrong Foundation.