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**Men, Prostate Cancer and  
Complementary and Alternative Medicine:  
A Narrative Inquiry.**

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## **Abstract**

Cancer is the most feared illness in Western societies. Yet remarkable medical advances are being made that extend life-spans the once would have been cut short by cancer. Prostate cancer is now a chronic disease in most cases. However in many cases medical treatment of a slowly progressing disease has left men with undesirable sequelae of treatment, such as impotence and urinary incontinence. Psychosocial research into prostate cancer has tended to concentrate on questions related to these side-effects of treatment. This research investigates a different aspect of prostate cancer; the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) by men with prostate cancer. It is a qualitative narrative inquiry that investigates the stories of six men, all diagnosed with this condition and all using CAM, either in a complementary sense or as an alternative to biomedical treatment. They ranged in time since diagnosis from two months to 17 years. The narrative account is divided into three sections; the first explores causal narratives, the second explores narratives of diagnosis with prostate cancer, and the third section examines narratives of treatment, both CAM and biomedical. It contributes to the understanding of how men with prostate cancer negotiate the phases of their illness and actively integrate CAM and biomedical narratives, treatments and practices. The production of positions consistent with culturally dominant masculine values is shown to be a part of this negotiation. The finding of 'sensitising events' that predisposed men to using CAM is discussed. Men with prostate cancer negotiate complex dialectics between their quantity of life and their quality of life and between active agency in their own healing and being a patient. The clinical relationship with both physicians and CAM persons is very important in ensuring that men make treatment decisions with full information and support. Implications of the findings and future research possibilities are discussed.

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