

# **Knowledge, attitudes and practices of traditional healers on prostate cancer, in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

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## **Background and objective**

Prostate cancer (PCa) is the second most common cancer and fifth leading cause of cancer death among men globally. In countries, such as South Africa, PCa is still underdiagnosed. Health promotion, education, awareness programmes for men and stakeholders, such as traditional healers are lacking. Many countries have health systems, conventional and unconventional (traditional medicine) health systems, which most patients consulting both. This study investigated the knowledge, attitudes, practices and perceptions of traditional healers living and working in a rural area regarding PCa.

## **Methods**

An exploratory qualitative study design was applied among six (6) traditional healers (key informants) living and working in Vhembe, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Snowballing sampling was used to invite traditional healers to participate and indepth interviews, using interview guides were used to collect data.

## **Results**

Five essential themes emerged from the data: 1) Conditions treated by traditional healers, gender and age, 2) Knowledge about prostate cancer – understanding and what they perceive as symptoms 3) Perceived understanding of what causes prostate cancer, 4) Treatment of prostate cancer 4) Working in collaboration with hospitals. All six participants in this study explained they can treat any diseases, people of all age groups and of any gender. Participants explained they do not understand the disease and some have heard about prostate cancer from the patients who come to consult. They admitted limitations in their knowledge regarding the causes and appropriate treatment for prostate cancer. The participants in this study perceived the development of prostate cancer to be attributable to various factors. They used traditional medicines to treat their patients with symptoms of prostate cancer.

## **Conclusion**

There was insufficient knowledge about the definition of prostate cancer noted among the traditional healers. Misconceptions still exist about the cause of the disease. These results will assist government and stakeholders working with cancer to develop training programmes for traditional healers

**Key words:** Prostate cancer; traditional healers; knowledge, attitudes and perceptions