Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy for Patients with Prostate Cancer Undergoing Radical Prostatectomy

The Problem
Patients with Prostate Cancer who undergo radical prostatectomy (surgical removal of the prostate) may suffer from temporary and sometimes permanent stress urinary incontinence (leakage of urine with coughing, sneezing, or other vigorous activity)

- Cancer Survivorship, which includes improving the quality of life for cancer patients, is a primary mission of the BIDMC Cancer Center
- Although most patients recover urine control, urine leakage has a significant negative impact on quality of life during the 2-year recovery period
- There is evidence supported by a randomized controlled trial that pelvic floor physical therapy with biofeedback can accelerate recovery of urine control
- BIDMC did not have a program in pelvic floor PT for prostate cancer patients
- The effectiveness and patient-centeredness of our survivorship efforts were less than ideal without a pelvic floor PT program.

Aim/Goal
- Goal #1: To build a team of professionals and start a brand new program in pelvic floor PT for prostate cancer patients undergoing radical prostatectomy
- Goal #2: To increase the number of radical prostatectomy patients who undergo pelvic floor PT
- Goal #3: To have every patient undergoing radical prostatectomy at BIDMC be offered pre-operative and post-operative pelvic floor physical therapy

The Team
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The Interventions
- Individualized strengthening program for pelvic floor musculature
- Education regarding strategies to reduce post-operative leakage
- Computer assisted EMG biofeedback used for visual and auditory feedback to facilitate correct exercise technique

Results
- The Pelvic Floor PT program for Prostate Cancer patients undergoing radical prostatectomy was successfully built from the ground up
- 75-100% of patients seen at the BIDMC Prostate Cancer Care Center who undergo radical prostatectomy now benefit from the new program
- Patient feedback has been overwhelmingly positive

Lessons Learned
- Pelvic floor PT Evaluation of radical prostatectomy patients is feasible
- Biofeedback was most helpful tool for teaching pelvic floor muscle contraction while avoiding use of extraneous muscle groups

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next
- Aim to have 100% of all radical prostatectomy patients at BIDMC be offered pelvic floor PT both pre- and post-operatively
- Conduct further analysis of patient-reported QOL to evaluate whether urinary QOL has improved overall since initiation of the program

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