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PROSTATE CANCER IN RURAL NIGERIA: CULTURAL INTERPRETATIONS OF CAUSES, KNOWLEDGE OF SYMPTOMS, SCREENING STATUS AND PREVENTIVE ACTIONS AMONG MEN

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About five years ago, the rate of prostate cancer was not less than 30 per 100,000 in Nigeria. This is likely to increase in the coming years. Agenda and priority setting in global health emphasizes prevention and early detection of prostate cancer. In Nigeria, the availability, accessibility, and utilization of prostate cancer screening is limited. This increases the burden of disease all the more so in rural settings. Prostate cancer, being gender specific has underlying cultural connotations. There is a dearth of evidence on the rural-cultural understanding of prostate cancer risks among rural men. Therefore, based on the arguments of Rosen stock's Health Belief Model, the study examined: rural men's knowledge of symptoms, pathways for accessing screening and cues to preventive action about prostate cancer. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to collect data from 55 men (at least 40 years old) purposively selected from five culture clusters in Ogun State, Nigeria. Thematically structured and content-analyzed findings from the study revealed that rural men had limited knowledge about the presentation of prostate cancer. Although the term '*Jejere*' (Cancer) was understood, prostate cancer was mainly described as a form of hernia and/or an outcome of a sexually transmitted infection. Most respondents had not sought clinical screening for prostate cancer. Consulting with and receiving treatment from medicine vendors, traditional healers, and hospitals were common. Preventive actions included avoiding multiple sexual partners and avoiding sweet foods. Policy makers should develop prostate cancer screening outreaches that can increase the knowledge, awareness and practice of screening among rural men.

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