

Few major complications in 30 days after prostate radiotherapy

By Reuters Health

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NEW YORK (Reuters Health), Feb 13 - Fewer than 7% of men with prostate cancer who undergo radiotherapy (RT) experience major complications in the first 30 days, according to a report in the January 15 issue of *Cancer*.

"RT is quite safe for older patients, although it is associated with a small but measurable increase in short-term major complications," Dr. Shabbir Alibhai from University Health Network, Toronto, told Reuters Health.

Alibhai and colleagues compared major 30-day complications in men who underwent RT or radical prostatectomy for nonmetastatic prostate cancer.

"Despite being older and having more comorbidity, men who received RT had lower complication rates in each category" compared with men who underwent surgery, the authors report.

Among the 7,661 men who received RT, nine (0.1%) died within 30 days. The 30-day mortality increased with age (from 0% for men under 60 years to 0.8% for men ages 80 years or older). Among the 11,010 patients who had surgery, 53 (0.5%) died within 30 days.

Only 6.5% of men had at least one complication within 30 days of RT, the researchers note, compared to 30.2% of surgery patients.

In the RT group, complication rates peaked within 30 days and then declined promptly, for every category of complications.

"Our data confirm the belief that most prostate cancer specialists have about the relative safety of RT in older men," Alibhai concluded. "We recognize this is only one part of a triangle, the other points being long-term efficacy and long-term toxicity (particularly genitourinary, sexual, and gastrointestinal) that must be considered when deciding on an active treatment (i.e., radical prostatectomy or RT) for early-stage prostate cancer."

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