Prostate cancer
Peer support groups: the Geneva experience

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Plan

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Reasons for implementing peer support

- **Survivors' initiative**
- **To help other patients**:  
  - to prevent them to face the same difficulties within health system (e.g. lack of good quality information)  
  - to share useful experience (e.g. management of incontinence)  
  - merely to support other patients
Balancing underlying forces

Compassion

Repair

Empowerment
Why training for peer support is needed (1)?

- Spontaneity, generosity, willing to do are prerequisite but are not sufficient to provide quality support

- Supporting others requests specific skills:
  - Listening
  - Understanding others' problems
  - Communication
  - Management of his/her own emotions
  - Empathy
Why training for peer support is needed (2) ?

...Furthermore

• Basic knowledge about prostate cancer disease and treatment are mandatory
  «volunteers provide good quality information»

• Sharing basic values such as
  – Respect of the other person
  – Respect of the difference «what I think is not what he thinks»
  – Consciousness of projection mechanism «his story is not my story»
  – Respect of privacy and confidentiality
Confidentiality
Peer support training program

- A **training course** was given to men with prostate cancer who wanted to become volunteers for peer support (8 sessions of 2.5 hours)

- The main goals of this course were:
  - to **improve communication skills** (to listen, to reformulate)
  - to **prevent individual projection**
  - to **manage their own emotions**

- Monthly group for **intervision (supervision)** and acquisition of **basic knowledge** in prostate cancer
Organization of peer support

- **Helpline support** by telephone and e-mail was set up to men with prostate cancer, wives, partners and people who are concerned, and those who want to know more.

- **Peer support** is given by volunteers who have themselves been affected by prostate cancer and who have personal experience of the main treatments and stages of prostate cancer.

- A **HOTLINE** was set up in collaboration with the [Geneva Cancer league](#).
Take-home messages

• Peer support cannot be improvised
• Volunteers need to develop basic skills in
  – Communication
  – Emotion management
  – Knowledge about the disease
• Volunteers have to respect some basic values
  – Respect of the other person
  – Respect of privacy and confidentiality