

Dr. David Samadi: COVID-19 pandemic leading to treatment delays in urologic cancers

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Dr. David Samadi

coronavirus COVID-19 has caused a worrisome ripple effect in our healthcare system especially for consequences on patients with urologic cancer. To get a better grasp on making informed decisions regarding postponing of treatment of urologic cancers, a recent collaborative review, led by Christopher J.D. Wallis, M.D., PhD of Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, was done to determine what association there was between treatment delays and important oncologic outcomes including survival in patients with urologic cancers.

“This review thoroughly looked at how COVID-19 has seriously affected all aspects of healthcare, including those with urologic cancers,” stated [Dr. David Samadi](#), Director of Men’s Health and Urologic Oncology at St. Francis Hospital in Roslyn, New York. “While some urologic cancers, depending on their cancer grade and stage, can be delayed for awhile taking into consideration a patient’s age, comorbidities and life expectancy, those with an advanced urologic cancer, really need to have continuity of their treatment plan in order to improve their outcome.”

When COVID-19 first arrived in the U.S., immediate changes in our healthcare systems were implemented. One response was to reprioritize nonessential planned surgical procedures with the intent of conserving health care resources, preventing spread of virus transmission, and to avoid hospitals being overwhelmed with patients. These surgical procedures often included treatments for urologic cancers such as bladder, prostate, kidney, testicular, and penile cancers.

“In my area as a prostate surgeon, it has already been known for years that men with low-risk prostate cancer, can be safely monitored for long durations as there is rarely adverse clinical outcomes,” explained [Dr. Samadi](#). “However, men with intermediate-risk or high-risk prostate

cancer with a high Gleason score and PSA, while not ideal, the findings from this study showed can be delayed for three to six months without a change in outcomes.”

The researchers with this study did acknowledge that there are many considerations to consider in order of complying with safety of both the patients and hospital staff during this pandemic. Considerations such as the patient’s ability and risk of traveling to a cancer treatment facility during a time of social distancing would have to factor in to the determination of ability for timely treatment.

“Certain cancers, such as testicular and penile, must be addressed and treated promptly. For example, any mass in the testes need to be treated as soon as possible,” exclaimed Dr. Samadi. “Once a man is diagnosed with testicular cancer, surgeries to remove it are quick and can usually be done in a same-day surgical center, without any major disruption of a health care system. Penile cancer is quite rare so there was scant information to be able to assess what the risks would be of a delayed treatment. Because it’s rare and can progress rapidly, delays in treatment should be avoided.”

Dr. Samadi went on to add, “We’re in an unprecedented time of having to make smart decisions with our patient’s best interest and outcome in mind. It’s unfortunate we have to even consider delays in cancer treatment. But it boils down to prioritizing those who need cancer treatment right now to avert any unfavorable outcome. I’m hoping that soon we will get back on track of practicing medicine without having to worry about limited health care resources during a pandemic. My top priority is to provide the best quality care for each of my patients. Any delays in cancer treatment must be thoroughly explained by providing the logic behind any decision such as this and to reassure my patients they will be care for.”

Dr. [David Samadi](#) is the Director of Men’s Health and Urologic Oncology at St. Francis Hospital in Long Island. He’s a renowned and highly successful board certified Urologic Oncologist Expert and Robotic Surgeon in New York City, regarded as one of the leading prostate surgeons in the U.S., with a vast expertise in prostate cancer treatment and Robotic-Assisted Laparoscopic Prostatectomy. Visit Dr. Samadi’s websites at [robotic oncology](#) and [prostate cancer 911](#).

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