

## Cancer Advances: Study Finds Surgeon Experience Has Impact on Complications of Radical Prostatectomy

From the February 1, 2003 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* [Read the Study](#) [1] Over the last several years, researchers have been investigating the association between the number of times a surgeon has performed a procedure and the extent of complications a patient experiences following that procedure. Several recent studies have shown that patients of surgeons who perform a particular surgery more frequently experience fewer complications and a quicker recovery following surgery than those with less experienced surgeons. A new study suggests this theory holds true for prostate cancer patients. A study by Dr. Mark S. Litwin and colleagues at the University of California, Los Angeles, suggests that prostate cancer patients ages 65 and older who have undergone radical prostatectomy with more experienced surgeons have fewer in-hospital complications, and spend fewer days in the hospital, than patients with less experienced surgeons. Researchers identified 2,292 men who underwent radical prostatectomy—the removal of the prostate gland—and examined the impact of the surgeon's experience on complications and recovery time. Researchers found that patients of surgeons who had infrequently performed the procedure were twice as likely to experience in-hospital complications and were hospitalized one day longer on average than patients whose surgeons had significant experience performing the procedure.

**What Does This Mean For Patients?** Radical prostatectomy is one of several treatments for prostate cancer, and remains the most common treatment in the United States for cancer that is confined to the prostate gland. Prostate cancer patients should be sure to ask their doctor about the number of times he or she has performed radical prostatectomy, and the surgeon's own outcomes of the surgery, before undergoing the procedure.

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.jco.org/cgi/content/abstract/21/3/401>