

### **Prostate cancer support group sustainability**

Early on in the study we noted that the groups often struggled and some groups had stopped meeting; while others were enduring, meeting regularly, and attracting large numbers of attendees. While collecting data from the 16 groups in this study, we became aware of 9 BC-based PCSGs that had recently disbanded, and many of the groups that we attended were challenged to [attract and retain members](#), [maintain cohesive leadership](#), and [provide up-to-date information](#) in a rapidly changing field. Group sustainability was formally investigated to better understand these issues.



### **Leadership and management**

The success and longevity of PCSGs is reliant [on effective leadership and management](#). PCSG leadership can be challenging for lay volunteers. The groups attract men and women with a wide diversity of needs that fluctuate considerably from one meeting to the next. [Cohesive leadership, shared management, and group facilitation skills were integral to meeting the needs of attendees and fostering their camaraderie and commitment to the group](#). Group members were adamant that PCSGs needed to be survivor-led, yet being a group leader required [significant time, energy, and commitment](#) that only a few men were able or willing to provide. PCSGs' dependence on one or two leaders and lack of defined terms and tenure, meant that group leaders were at risk for burnout. In these situations, the long-term viability of the group was uncertain. Finding ways to support the leadership of PCSGs and the development of succession planning was critical to ensuring group sustainability.

### **Collaboration or emancipation**

PCSG sustainability was also influenced by [linkages with professional organizations](#). One option for the PCSGs in this study was to affiliate with cancer fundraising agencies. However, concerns were expressed by some PCSG attendees that the groups would end up working for organizations that dictated the terms and conditions under which they operated. Many PCSGs were resistant to anything resembling a “takeover” or “branding” by organizations that did not have the capacity to provide resources to the groups and willingness to negotiate mutually acceptable terms of operation.