

Prostate Cancer: A Wake Up Call

One out of every six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in the United States. In fact it is one of the most common types of cancer in men, second only to lung cancer. Because prostate cancer generally grows more slowly than other cancers the survival rate is very high, especially with early diagnosis and treatment.

Charles Maack, a prostate cancer survivor and mentor for the Wichita Chapter of Us TOO, International, Inc. says, "dying of prostate cancer is avoidable." Diagnosed in 1992 he continues to monitor his PSA levels and is on a maintenance treatment plan. Chuck, now 76, has studied the issues involved in the treatment of prostate cancer and shares that information at health fairs and cancer support organizations. He has also served as a Consumer Reviewer-Mentor with various Prostate Cancer Research Programs.

"I have experienced several therapies to combat this disease and my ardent desire is to educate men before they

are diagnosed...about the absolute importance of nutrition and physical activity that might prevent it, and annual PSA and DRE examination to check for prostate abnormalities. Early detection can equate to effective treatment," Chuck says.

Chuck has served on the Chapters Advisory Panel of Us TOO International, Inc. and on the Patient Advisory Council of the Prostate Cancer Research and Education Foundation. He is also a counselor for the local American Cancer Society and Victory-in-the-Valley Cancer Patient Support organizations. "I am an active advocate for extremely necessary Prostate Cancer research funding and awareness of the disease by all men."

The American Urological Association and the American Cancer Society recommends men age 50 and older begin annual PSA and digital rectal exams, and men who are in the high risk groups should begin testing between age 40-45. Being aware of the prostate cancer risk factors will help you determine if and when you should discuss screening with your doctor.

Risk factors:

- Chances of developing prostate cancer increases after age 50
- Black men are at higher risk
- Family history of prostate cancer
- A high-fat diet and obesity
- High testosterone levels which can stimulate the prostate gland

Talk with your doctor

- When urinary problems such as decreased flow, starting and stopping while urinating, difficulty urinating occur



Screening available

- PSA is a blood test that checks the prostate-specific antigen levels. Elevated PSA levels don't always indicate cancer, it can also signify prostate enlargement, inflammation or infection
- Digital rectal exam (DRE) can be used to discover abnormalities in the prostate gland, such as size, shape or texture

The next step

- Transrectal ultrasound uses sound waves to take a picture of your prostate gland
- Prostate biopsy can be used to retrieve several thin sections of the gland tissue which will be evaluated by a pathologist

Additional testing

- A Bone Scan can determine whether the cancer has spread to the bone
- An Ultrasound can help indicate if cancer is present in nearby tissues
- Computerized tomography (CT) scan can identify enlarged lymph nodes or abnormalities in other organs
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) produces detailed cross-sectional images that can show if cancer has spread to the bones and lymph nodes
- Lymph node biopsy can be used if enlarged lymph nodes are detected by the CT scan or MRI to determine if cancerous cells are present

If cancer has been confirmed the next step is to determine the aggressiveness. The most com-

mon scale used is the Gleason score, used to rate the microscopic appearance of the cancer cells. Individual ratings from 1 to 5 are given to the two most common patterns identified, then those numbers are added together for an overall score, ranging from 2, non-aggressive cancer to 10, very aggressive cancer.

After the aggressiveness score is determined, the stage, or extent of the spread of cancer is established.

- Stage I, signifies early cancer confined to a small area that the doctor can't feel.
- Stage II, the cancer can be felt but is confined to the prostate gland.
- Stage III, the cancer has spread to nearby tissues.
- Stage IV, the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes, bones or other organs.

Treatment options:

- External beam radiation therapy precisely focused in your prostate, minimizes harm to the surrounding tissues. Treatments are usually given in a series, five days a week for eight weeks. The treatment takes about 10 minutes and isn't painful.
- Radioactive seeds implanted into the prostate, known as brachytherapy. It delivers a higher dose of radiation than external beams. The implant procedure takes 1-2 hours under general anesthesia. All radiation in these pellets is usually exhausted in approximately one year.
- Hormone therapy helps to block hormones from getting into cancer cells, which can stimulate their growth. In advanced prostate

cancer a combinations of drugs can help shrink the cancer and slow the growth of tumors. Some drugs may decrease your body's production of testosterone, while others may block your body's ability to use it.

Us Too International

The Wichita Chapter of Us Too International, Inc. is a non-profit, charitable prostate cancer support group. They meet the second Monday of every month at 7:30 PM in the McNamara Center, Via-Christi St. Joseph Medical Center, 3rd floor, 3600 E. Harry. Spouses, significant others and adult friends are welcome to come. The emphasis of the group is to help patients continue to lead healthy and productive lives. They offer fellowship, shared counseling, a positive outlook and discussions that pertain to medical options and new updates.

Some meeting topics may include the use of radiation therapy, surgical procedures, hormonal treatments, the affects of incontinence or impotence and their treatment, benign prostate conditions, diet and nutrition and other topics relating to prostate health. Speakers include radiologists, oncologists, urologists, psychologists, nutritionists and persons who can impart pertinent information relative to living with this disease. Attendance is free of charge.

The key to fighting this disease is to be informed and aware so that you can work closely with your physician to make decisions about how to treat your condition. You are not alone, organizations like Us TOO are here to help. ☺

~BD THARP

“Health is a large word. It embraces not the body only, but the mind and spirit as well; and not today's pain or pleasure alone, but the whole being and outlook of a man.”

~James H. West