

Well Man Clinic & managing early stage Prostate Cancer

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“Your recent PSA blood test has come back slightly raised,” said my GP, “I would like to refer you to an urologist for some further test, these are likely to be a proper ‘examination’, MRI scan and biopsy of your prostate gland.....as you know this might be nothing, except an enlargement of the gland, or it could mean you have a tumour which could be cancerous”.

Last December this was my brief conversation with my GP. I was going to celebrate my 60th birthday in February and even though I had worked as a nurse in the NHS for 30 plus years and had broken bad news to patients and their families regularly - this still ‘phased’ me. Over the next 6 weeks my family and I experienced quite a bit of anxiety and stress.

10 years previously, my GP had suggested that it would be sensible for me to have a *Well Man’s check* – this involved a general medical examination, various blood and urine tests, an ECG, and blood pressure recording. I continued to be checked every year and up to December 2016 nothing abnormal had been found! Carrying out a regular PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood test is considered ‘controversial’ as it is not a 100% reliable and men can get so-called ‘false’ results. However, at the moment, it is the only blood test available and is used as an indicator that there might be a problem that needs further investigation.

My life-style is what I call ‘average’ – I do regular exercise (walking and cycling), eat a reasonably balanced diet and drink socially. In addition, having worked in the NHS for many years, I have ‘learnt’ how to cope with stress and how to maintain a sensible work-life balance. I am married (my wife is a resuscitation nurse specialist) with two adult-children (my son wants to be an engineer and my daughter is a final year student veterinary surgeon).

The urologist appointment was arranged for the middle of January – patients with a potential cancer diagnosis are fast-tracked through the NHS system. My MRI scan and biopsies were carried out a week later. I had my diagnosis by the end of January – *early stage prostate cancer*. The urologist and I had a very honest conversation about treatment options and risks – surgery or radiotherapy. He asked me to spend a few days thinking about my choices and arranged for me to speak to a consultant radiologist and one of the urology nurse specialists. I, also, carried out my own research, looking up information on the *NHS Choices* (NHS patient information) and the *NHS Evidence* (health professional’s clinical evidence) websites. I talked things through with the family – ‘we’ agreed surgery was the best option, it meant if the tumour reoccurred after surgery then radiotherapy would be the fall back treatment. The surgery would be a robotic assisted ‘key-hole’ procedure, which would mean the removal of the tumour could be undertaken more accurately with fewer complications. The main risk was the anaesthetic, but I knew that once the operation was over the consultant would want me on a ‘rapid mobilisation and rehabilitation plan’. This means you are up and out of bed some 60 to 90 minutes after the operation and have to do various breathing and leg exercises. You are normally sent back home after 48 hours with a list of exercises to do to ensure you do not get ‘blood clots’ in your legs and are also given 28 days worth of ‘anti-clotting’ injections. You are taught how to do pelvic floor exercises, and advised to drink at least 2 to 3 litres of fluid a day.

My surgery was carried out in early February just after my 60th – my family bought me a paddleboard for my birthday, so were clearly optimistic that I was heading for a full recovery. I used the board for the first time in August in Cornwall, and realised I needed to do more regular exercise to improve my

core muscles. I returned to work in April 2017 on a 3 week 'phased return' and am now fully back at work. I have been fully supported by an excellent line manager and 'my' team.

My follow up care has been to have repeat PSA tests every 2 months – which so far have demonstrated that things are going in the right direction. The blood tests continue 2 monthly for a year and if they remain 'good' will then be checked every 6 or 12 months for the rest of my life. I also joined a gym and go there at least 2-3 times a week, and have even attended a couple of *mindful-breathing classes*.

Whilst everyone is different and will have varying views about their health and the risks associated with their life-styles – I would encourage male colleagues and friends to take a step-back and think about having a *Well Man's check* once they reach 50 years maybe even at 45 years. Early diagnosis and treatment of a disease or condition is much easier to manage and cope with.

As I mentioned, I was initially 'phased' by the diagnosis - after spending time reading about the disease and treatment I came to view that you can either take 'control' of the cancer or allow it to take 'control' of you. This sounds simple in many ways, but often your mind can be clouded by everything that is going on at the time, including telling other people and managing their reactions. So having time to think and reflect on your own is important, but also having someone who you can talk things through with is equally important.

If you want to find out more about the *Well Man's Clinic*, prostate disease and/or mindful breathing, I have added some useful web links below.

Useful links:

[Well Man Clinic](#)

[PSA Test](#)

[Prostate Disease](#)

[NHS Choices](#)

[NHS Evidence](#)

[Mindfulness breathing](#)