



Prostate Cancer
Foundation
of Australia

PROSTATE SUPPORTER

Newsletter of the Prostate Cancer Support Groups
of South Australia and Northern Territory

www.prostate.org.au

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Stimulating avenues of new research

Significant ongoing funding commitment to prostate cancer research was announced by PCFA's Andrew Giles in Adelaide recently.

TO maintain the recent momentum generated in prostate cancer research, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia is committed to funding new projects on an annual basis. Grants that have been made available include:

- Young Investigator grants of up to \$125,000 a year for up to four years, to support scientists (regardless of their degree) who have demonstrated research ability and are ready to become independent investigators.
- Concept Grants of up to \$150,000 a year for up to two years, to support senior investigators not currently studying prostate cancer but who can bring innovative research proposals or new technology to the field.
- Project Grants of up to \$125,000 a year for up to three years to encourage rigorous proposals for research that

will provide direct, tangible benefits to patients with prostate cancer, within a relatively short time frame.

- Equipment Grants of up to \$100,000, to be allocated to investigators currently working in the prostate cancer field. Preference will be given to proposals with matching funding.

The PCFA's priority areas for research are:

- DISCOVERY of the genetic and cellular factors which initiate and/or perpetuate prostate cancer.
- DISCOVERY, development and clinical validation of new tests to detect prostate cancer, and/or to determine whether a patient's cancer is curable; new biomarkers that predict the future clinical course of prostate cancer, and/or the response to future chemotherapy.

Newsletters can also be read online at www.pcagsa.org.au/pages/supporter.html



PCFA's Andrew Giles: Research grants are crucial.

- DISCOVERY, development and preclinical and clinical validation of novel molecular targets for chemotherapy of locally-invasive or metastatic prostate cancer, including androgen-independent cancers.
- DEVELOPMENT of new treatment strategies for prostate cancer, especially locally-invasive or metastatic cancers.
- PROJECTS which, if successful, are likely to provide immediate improvements in the quality of life of patients with prostate cancer.

The grant round is launched in April each year, for funding to start the following January. For full details about the program, grant categories and deadlines, visit the PCFA web site www.prostate.org.au

in brief...

CONTRIBUTIONS from all Support Group members to the newsletters are welcome; contact Mel Behn at Foster Hill PR and Marketing by phoning (08) 8231 3555 or email items and images to prostate-news@fosterhill.com.au.

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99
or visit the website www.prostate.org.au

**COMING
EVENTS****APRIL MEETING**

The Action Group will next meet in the upstairs meeting room of the Cancer Council SA building, 202 Greenhill Rd, Eastwood at 5.30pm on Tuesday April 14. At present, entry is through the front door on Greenhill Rd.

**ACTION GROUP
MEMBERSHIP**

A lack of numbers continues to be a major limiting factor in the activities of the Action Group, and we welcome any member of a support group or interested supporter who feels that they might be able to help. The Action Group doesn't just conduct meetings for the sake of filling in time, but places an emphasis on Action and spreading the word on prostate cancer awareness. If you are a man or woman who likes to get things done, we would welcome your inclusion to this important group – and rest assured that you won't remain idle!

• For more information about the Action Group and its activities, visit the South Australian Prostate Cancer Action Group's dedicated website, with detailed archives containing its newsletters, at <http://www.pcagsa.org.au>

Action Group comes alive at Semaphore

The Man Alive! Health Festival was again a great location to promote prostate cancer awareness, as Dean Wall reports.

MAN Alive! 2009, a free public festival held on March 15 that focused on men's health issues and was designed for the whole family to attend, proved yet again to be a highly successful promotional venture for the Action Group.

The group's information stall at Man Alive!, held in perfect weather on the Semaphore foreshore, was attended throughout the day by an enthusiastic team of volunteers, handing out information brochures and speaking with many people walking around the site. This event proved to be a major success, with more than 150 enquiries recorded.

Thanks must go to those who took part in serving at the stall. Each year, having a Prostate Cancer Support Group profile at this event provides an excellent opportunity to inform a maximum number of people about prostate cancer. If even one person follows up an inquiry at the stall by getting checked out and/or treated, then we consider that our effort has been worthwhile.

CHAPTER MEETING

JEFF Roberts, Ian Fisk and Dean Wall from the Action Group attended the Central Australian Chapter council meeting on March 19, submitting a budget based on holding three awareness events during the year.



Crowds enjoyed fun events at the Man Alive! festival, such as waving the PCFA giant underpants (above), and the Action Group was prominent at its information stall (below).



Planning is underway for an awareness event later this year in the South-East, either at Naracoorte or Millicent. Another possible location is Gawler, to help boost numbers within the Barossa/Gawler Support Group.

We also gave notice that the Action Group wants to attend the Yorke Peninsula (Paskeville) Field Days, held over three days at the end of September. It's a great opportunity for the PCFA to

be directly involved and book a site in its own right, with members of the Action Group and local support groups manning it. With 50,000 attendees expected, it's too good an opportunity to miss as a promotional exercise for prostate cancer awareness.

Other possible events that could be considered for an information stall are the Lucindale Field Day, and the Eyre Peninsula Field Days, held in Cleve.

Prostate Cancer Support and Awareness: ADELAIDE GROUP

COMING
EVENTSAPRIL 20
MEETING:

The Adelaide Group meets on the third Monday of each month in the Park View Room of the Fullarton Park Centre, 411 Fullarton Rd, Fullarton.

Guest speaker Kevin O'Shaughnessy will talk about his research on men who have had a prostatectomy.

MAY 18
MEETING:

A general discussion evening is planned, including an address by Paul Redman, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia's Support Group Service Manager.

• For more information about coming activities, visit the Adelaide Group's dedicated website at www.psaadelaide.org or ring Ian Fisk on 8296 3350.

Providing answers for many sensitive questions

The revitalised Adelaide Group welcomed an opportunity to talk frankly on myriad prostate cancer issues, as Ian Fisk reports.

Dr Alan Stapleton conducted a highly informative question and answer session at the Adelaide Group's March meeting, covering topics as diverse as treatment and testing options to ejaculation issues.

Dr Stapleton emphasised that fighting cancer is not the same for everybody, so treatment needs to be individualised – and success can be unpredictable.

As an example, he explained that one of his current patients had been first diagnosed with cancer 20 years ago, yet others can get overwhelmed by the disease only after a few months after being diagnosed.

He acknowledged that complementary treatment had helped many. As well as performing surgery for prostate cancer patients, Dr Stapleton also does brachytherapy.

One of the many interesting facts he spoke of was that the more ejaculations a young man had may protect them from prostate cancer. However, the number that an older man has can have the opposite effect.

Dr Stapleton advised that prostate cancer sufferers should not rush into a treatment decision. Prostate specific antigen is 100,000 times more concentrated in the ejaculate than in the blood.

Three types of prostate biopsies were mentioned – the transrectal, one from tissue removed as part of a TURP (Transurethral



Dr Alan Stapleton: Treatment needs to be individualised.

Resection of the Prostate) and transperineal.

Gleason scores and staging were discussed. When he was a junior doctor, 50 per cent of prostate cancer was diagnosed initially from swollen lymph glands when the disease was incurable and advanced metastatic.

Presently, only 7 per cent of cases are diagnosed at that stage. Typically, 50 per cent of men with a positive bone scan for prostate cancer will have a PSA greater than 60.

It has been estimated that for a bone metastasis to show up, there must be in the order of 100,000 prostate cancer cells together in one place. Various treatments were discussed including hormone and chemotherapy.

The side effects of various treatments were also covered in detail. Intermittent hormone treatment has been shown to

improve a man's quality of life. How a decision is made on the various treatment options was covered in depth, with consideration to what is important to each patient (and their partner) in considering possible success and side effects.

The relative risk of a man developing prostate cancer if a first degree relative (father or brother) has prostate cancer was also talked about. The age for a man's PSA to be first tested was also discussed. The current recommendation is 35 if prostate cancer is in the family. Dr Stapleton did not feel it was necessary for a DRE at this age.

The benefits of PSA testing before and after treatment were discussed, and despite the heavy tone of many issues discussed, some nice touches of humour from Dr Stapleton helped make the evening discussion enjoyable as well as very informative.

COMING EVENTS FOR 2009

APRIL MEETING:

The Support Group held a successful meeting – a Round Robin general discussion evening – on April 1 in the boardroom at Noarlunga Community Hospital, Alexander Kelly Drive, Noarlunga. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 6, at 6.30pm.

• For more information, visit the City of Onkaparinga Support Group's dedicated website at www.pcsog.org

• Special thanks are extended to the City of Onkaparinga Support Group sponsors:

- Southern Primary Health Woodcroft
- Port Noarlunga-Christies Beach RSL Sub Branch
- toneraction Christies Beach
- The Original Open Market

– and to all those who provide valuable support to our group, especially the City of Onkaparinga Council.

Understanding the depths of depression

Explaining the extent of depression issues provided great insights for support group members, reports John Shields.

AT the March meeting of the City of Onkaparinga Support Group, guest speaker Loretta McFarlane, a peer educator from the Council on the Ageing (COTA), delivered a powerful talk on depression and its far reaching effects.

Loretta explained that many people die unnecessarily and unfortunately as a consequence of depression. These people don't know how to relate in a happy way with other people, and their skills at masking the signs of depression mean that others, even those closest to them, may not even know that they have depression.

Depression, which can affect people at many different points in their life, is a treatable disease – not so different to other illnesses, with remedies and solutions available to those seeking help.

Loretta explained how former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett started Beyond Blue, a support organisation that focuses on teenagers with depression, after his own son committed suicide. The Kennetts found out too late that he had depression, but continue to help others by devoting their energies to the aid program.

Beyond Maturity Blues,

VISITING MURRAY BRIDGE

John Shields, Bryan Hearn, Malcolm Ellis and Jeff Roberts attended a meeting at Murray Bridge on March 5 with Ron Lehman (Murray Bridge), Trevor Muirhead (Tailem Bend) and Malcolm Piggott (Mannum) to discuss plans for starting a new Support Group at Murray Bridge and further groups at both Tailem Bend and Mannum. Several basic ideas were discussed in detail. Ron, Trevor, Malcolm and other interested people will now aim to find a suitable venue, date and time, and distribute 500 flyers with all relevant details throughout these three locations. We wish them well, and will keep you posted regarding their progress.

SUPPORT FOR THE NEW PAYNEHAM GROUP

Malcolm and Beverley Ellis, and Phyllis and John Shields from the City of Onkaparinga Support Group attended the Payneham Support Group's second meeting on March 17, along with more than 30 other people in attendance at a very lively meeting. PCFA Support Group Services Manager Paul Redman was also at the meeting, and spoke about his role and involvement with Support Groups, explaining the PCFA's many activities.

a program that focuses specifically on seniors and older people affected by depression, was explained in detail by Loretta and gave us a lot to think about. We were able to relate to many of the situations that Loretta discussed, with some surprising revelations – that sometimes depression is not recognised because it is thought to be Alzheimers Disease.

COTA generously provided the group with a large quantity of books on this subject; Taking Care of Yourself and your Family, booklets about retrenchment and financial loss, and information sheets about depression in older people. The Onkaparinga group now has a good supply of these materials for future meetings and for public information days.

And now for something completely different ... a touch of humour

- Two guys are drinking in a bar. One says, "Did you know that lions have sex 10 to 15 times a night?" "BUGGER!" says his friend, slamming his hands down loudly onto the bar. "And I just went and joined Rotary....."

Mitcham Prostate Cancer Support Group

What's a normal bladder?

Understanding the correct function of a healthy bladder is of great significance to prostate cancer patients, as Mitcham group chairperson Terry Harbour reports.

THE new “welcoming kit” prepared by Jeff Roberts before the Mitcham Group’s February meeting was put to good use for a bumper turn out at the March meeting.

We welcomed 23 people to the meeting, including Hayden and Dianne Radford and John O’Leary, who were each provided with a kit to take away with them.

Guest speaker for the evening was Leigh Pretty, the clinical practice manager and consultant at the Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park. She has specialised in this field for 20 years, working previously in Melbourne and now at Daw Park.

Leigh’s role involves seeing patients in hospital, outpatients and providing help over the phone, and she is also involved in health education and research.

Her presentation was on bladder function, asking what’s normal and what’s not? Generally acceptable bladder

functions equate to passing urine four to six times a day, and up to two times a night, with people able to feel that their bladder is empty after having gone to the toilet.

A healthy bladder should also be able to hold on to fluid after the first urge to pass urine, and is continent (doesn’t leak).

Leigh explained the reasons why one should be able to hold on for a little while after getting the urge to pass urine, and detailing why babies are born incontinent, yet as they grow older the development of muscles and nerves leads to continence and bladder control.

The complex interaction between the bladder, its nervous system and its ability to stretch and contract was identified, outlining the brain’s issuing of instructions to the bladder to either hold on or to pass urine.

There are various types of incontinence. The common problem of stress urinary

incontinence in men and women is brought on by effort or exertion, such as coughing and sneezing.

The role of the urinary sphincters is to control continence, and men who have had radical prostatectomy, from which one of their two sphincters has been removed, are prone to stress incontinence for some time after surgery.

Leigh explained the common conservative treatments for incontinence, which include pelvic floor muscle training, bladder training, medications, continence aids and surgery. However, she stressed the importance of pelvic floor muscle exercises.

Because the muscle groups support a lot of weight during the day, it is quite appropriate to put your feet up and have an afternoon “nanna nap” to take the weight off these muscles and allow them relax.

Great! That’s now my excuse for enjoying my regular afternoon nap.

COMING EVENTS

APRIL 23 MEETING

The next Mitcham Support Group meeting will be held on Thursday April 23, in the Colonel Light Gardens RSL club rooms at 4 Prince George Parade, Colonel Light Gardens, from 7pm. Guest speaker will Dr Joe Abadia from the Men’s Health Clinic at Seaton. Dr Abadia will speak on prostate and sexual health, and lead discussion on general health issues for men. We also hope to welcome a visit from Alan Hall and several members of the Barossa and Gawler Support Group to this meeting.

• For more information on events and group activities, visit the Mitcham Group’s dedicated website at www.psamitcham.org

Pirtek National Fishing Challenge aims to net big funds

THE PIRTEK National Fishing Challenge, a competition being held in each State and Territory across Australia, aims to raise \$100,000 for the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia

Pirtek, with Berkley, Lowrance and Evinrude

has amassed a prize pool of more than \$100,000, with each winning target species worth \$5000 cash and great prize packs for second and third places, and junior anglers.

The competition will be held on Sunday, April 19, between 6am and

6pm. Each State’s target species will be revealed after 6pm on Saturday April 18 via the website www.pirtekfishingchallenge.com.au

Competitors will have to catch their State’s target species, photograph the fish on the Pirtek brag mat

along with their registered angler number and send the photo to www.pirtekfishingchallenge.com.au – with the idea being to catch, measure, photograph and release the fish.

Winners will be posted on the website on April 25.

Barossa and Gawler Prostate Cancer Support Group

New ideas spark fresh enthusiasm

A free-ranging discussion about the role and future of the Barossa/Gawler Group produced several fresh ideas to revitalise the membership, as Alan Hall reports.

FAILURE to attract new members is a major problem facing the Barossa/Gawler Prostate Support Group, and members that attended the group's meeting in March resolved to increase the profile of the group within the northern region communities in a bid to bolster chances of attracting new members.

Recent articles published in local newspapers failed to elicit a significant response, so a different set of strategies will be attempted to draw more attention to the support group, commencing with a reminder to local GPs and urologists that the group exists specifically to support men who have been recently diagnosed with prostate cancer. An attempt

will be made through the Division of General Practice to provide a speaker from our support group to address a meeting of local GPs to explain these points.

The Barossa and Gawler Group will also place a greater emphasis on individual support, both for existing members and for other prostate cancer survivors within the community. To facilitate this, members are being asked to consent for their contact information to be made available to others in the group.

Gawler has a population of about 20,000 people and is growing rapidly, yet there remains only one active member of our group from Gawler. The Action Group has

agreed to consider Gawler's needs when discussing future public awareness meetings with a view to the possible formation of a separate support group in Gawler, allowing the present group to consolidate within the Barossa.

There is considerable interest among the current group members to occasionally join with another support group for meetings – to introduce variety and greater fellowship for the membership.

Mitcham Group president Terry Harbour has kindly agreed to invite Barossa members to the next meeting of the Mitcham Group, which will be held in the Colonel Light Gardens RSL Club on April 23. The guest speaker will be Dr Joe Abadia,

COMING EVENT

APRIL 23 MEETING

- The Barossa and Gawler support group's next meeting will be a special event on **Tuesday, April 23** – a visit to join with the Mitcham Prostate Cancer Support Group meeting at the Colonel Light Gardens RSL Club, 4 Prince George Parade, Colonel Light Gardens.
Time: 7pm-8.45pm.
Guest Speaker: Dr Joe Abadia, who will be talking on prostate and sexual health, plus general men's health.

delivering a talk on prostate and sexual health, and leading a discussion on general health issues for men.

Research findings and news items from around the world

Submitted by Trevor Hunt

Overweight men risk prostate cancer recurrence

BEING overweight or obese increases a man's risk of prostate cancer recurrence after radical surgery for prostate cancer, research shows.

"Obesity is not only a risk factor for known medical conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, but also harbors the risk for unfavorable outcomes in cancer patients," says Dr Ahmed Magheli from Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Baltimore.

Dr Magheli was part of a team investigating the significance of body weight as a predictor

of "biochemical" prostate cancer recurrence (identified by increasing PSA) among men who had radical prostatectomy. The men were tracked for an average of 4.5 years.

Investigators found that a higher body mass index predicted a greater likelihood of rising PSA levels after surgery, indicating prostate cancer recurrence.

Compared with normal-weight men, the researchers found that overweight and obese men had lower 5- and 10-year biochemical recurrence-free survival rates

and shorter times to biochemical recurrence after surgery.

"Obese patients may have an increased likelihood of needing additional treatment following surgery," says Dr Magheli. "They should be followed-up more closely."

Dr Magheli now hopes to research whether obese prostate cancer patients who have surgery to remove their prostate could reduce their risk of experiencing recurrent disease by losing weight.

• Source: Reuters Health, 30/1/09

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99
or visit the website www.prostate.org.au

McLaren Districts Prostate Cancer Support Group

Shared stories remind members that 'we are all in this together'

A generous prostate cancer supporter shared his time and some familiar recollections of his prostate cancer journey with group members, as Bryan Hearn reports.

FOR the March meeting of the McLaren Districts Prostate Cancer Support Group, an invitation had been extended to Gordon Pickard of Fairmont Homes – a notable prostate cancer patient who donated a Da Vinci surgical machine to the Royal Adelaide Hospital – to attend as our guest speaker but he informed us he was unable to attend.

As a consequence, City of Onkaparinga councillor Artie Ferguson had no hesitation in accepting our late invitation to speak on how his prostate cancer “journey” commenced – and it sounded so familiar to the support group members.

Artie had visited a doctor about other matters, which resulted in him having a blood test. At the time he had no suspicion of prostate cancer but the result came back with an extremely elevated PSA reading and his treatment regime commenced immediately. Over the years this has proved very successful, and Artie currently has a PSA reading of 1.2.

COMING EVENT

THURSDAY APRIL 16

The McLaren Districts group will next meet in the administration building at the rear of the McLaren Vale & Districts War Memorial Hospital, Aldersey St, McLaren Vale, at 7pm on Thursday, April 16. Guest speaker will be Dr Carole Pinnock from the Daw Park Repatriation Hospital.

The next meeting, on Thursday May 21, will feature a talk from local area naturopath Debra Cooper.

- Contact group president Bryan Hearn on 8323 7924 or 0410 539 274, to confirm your attendance and meeting details.

This experience caused Artie to become involved with his local Onkaparinga Prostate Cancer Support Group, realising that his role as a councillor for the region could help the group. “I went there to give support but instead got support for myself,” he explained.

He congratulated members for having successfully established a new group in McLaren Vale and noted how important it is that ladies are participating in this group. He also stressed the importance of

members being encouraged to talk about their problems with others in the support group, and to do whatever they can to help each other when required. He cited the “we” factor – that we are all in this together – as a primary motivation behind this approach.

Artie spoke of his plans to organise a Prostate Cancer Awareness Day on July 18 at the SANFL game at Noarlunga between South Adelaide and Sturt, competing for an annual shield that has been provided by a local sponsor.

He also spoke of his involvement as current chairman of the Fleurieu Cancer Network, which was established just over 12 months ago. A major project for this group has been producing a cancer patients’ diary, so that on diagnosis a patient can be provided with the diary to chart their progress and record personal details. Space is provided for notes and questions for future visits to specialists and doctors.

This project is supported by City of Onkaparinga Mayor Lorraine Rosenberg as patron and horticultural consultant Michael Keelan as vice patron.

In other matters, members were provided with a brief overview of the Cancer Council’s Relay for Life event in late March, as well as detailing Artie’s involvement with the Christies Beach Open Market, through which local groups and associations can make applications for some funding.

And now for something completely different ... a touch of humour

TWO OLD MEN were talking, and one said: “Last night the wife and I went to a new restaurant and it was really great. I recommend it highly.”

The other said: “What’s its name?”

The first man thought and thought, and finally said: “What’s the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know... the one that’s red and has thorns.”

“Do you mean a rose?” the other man asked. “Yes, that’s the one,” replied the man. He then turned

towards the kitchen and yelled: “Rose, what’s the name of that restaurant we went to last night?”

YOUNG BAZZA moved to the bush and bought a donkey from a farmer for \$100. The farmer agreed to deliver the donkey the next day, but instead arrived to say the donkey had died. Bazza replied: “Well, give me my money back.” But the farmer said, “I went and spent it already.”

Bazza said, “Just bring me the

dead donkey. I’m going to raffle it.”

Horrified, the farmer said, “You can’t raffle a dead donkey!”

A month later, the farmer met Bazza and asked what had happened.

“I sold 500 tickets at \$2 each and made a profit of \$998,” said Bazza.

The farmer said, “Didn’t anyone complain?”

Bazza said, “Just the guy who won. So I gave him his \$2 back.”

Bazza now sits on the board of trustees for the Reserve Bank.

Payneham Prostate Cancer Support Group

Research prompts discussion

Support and interest keeps growing for the Payneham group, as Phil Davis reports.

BUILDING on research outlined by our February speaker Kevin O'Shaughnessy prompted discussion to start the Payneham group's March meeting, about problems experienced by men following treatment. No matter what form of treatment one has for prostate cancer, life changes regardless of how successful it was. There will be side effects, both physically and psychologically.

To cope with this, I think of

the words of Lance Armstrong: "Live Strong." There are many things we can do to empower ourselves – obtain greater knowledge, live a healthier and more stress-free life, accept ourselves as we are, accept help from others, seek professional medical help and enjoy life after a diagnosis of prostate cancer.

We enjoyed a more comfortable meeting this month as a result of relocating into the auditorium of the

RSL complex, which has an abundant amount of space, far less noise (which unfortunately impacted on our meeting last month) – and the microphone operates correctly.

We were indeed privileged to have in attendance at the meeting guest speaker Paul Redman from the PCFA, Malcolm and Bev Ellis (Malcolm is chair of the Central Australia Chapter of Prostate Cancer Support Groups), John and Phyllis Shields (John is

president of the Onkaparinga Prostate Cancer Support and Awareness Group) and Ian Fisk (co-chair and secretary of the Adelaide Group).

Frances Bedford, State Member for Florey, has written to us emphasising the importance of having a group in the North Eastern suburbs assisting with men's health, and has allowed us to print our group newsletter at her electoral office. For this, we offer a great thank you.

Women's key role in support groups

RECOGNISING the contribution and support of our wives and/or partners is a crucial part of prostate cancer support groups. It can be especially difficult for women to get help because they are not the patient, yet are still greatly affected by a diagnosis of prostate cancer in their partner.

South Australia's John Oliffe, currently an Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of British Columbia in Canada, has a particular interest in men's health and prostate cancer, and recently conducted research into the role of women who attend support groups.

He interviewed 20 women who attended meetings in British Columbia, and observed women's participation at meetings. This research confirmed Oliffe's impression from previous research that women play an important role in groups.

Oliffe identified three general roles by women in groups: social facilitator (making important connections, such as greeting people, welcoming new members and looking after refreshments), background supporter (accompanying their men in the audience, and often taking notes) and cancer co-survivor, participating as active stakeholders and readily engaging in discussions.

Some women told Oliffe their husbands might not have attended meetings on their own. And while women were primarily attending to support their husbands, they also have issues of their own.

One spouse said, "I had a need to talk. As much as your family and friends love you, they don't really have the knowledge. I believe that the groups can help enormously emotionally and I think emotion plays a huge role in the disease."

Professor Oliffe says women play a very important role in

maintaining support groups. During his research, two support groups in British Columbia folded; both were men-only groups. "In some groups, women might be the glue that holds the group together," he says.

In conclusion Professor Oliffe advised that women who want to get involved should understand an important message: "Don't expect that men operate and behave in a group the same way that women would.

"Some women have said to me that men don't talk like they should, but I think men just talk the way they talk, and it's different to what women do, but it works.

"There is a lot of literature that says men don't look after their health, but guys in prostate support groups are definitely the exception to the rule.

"I think it's one of the great stories in men's health promotions."

COMING EVENTS

APRIL MEETING
The Payneham Support Group will next meet in the Payneham RSL Clubrooms, 360 Payneham Rd, Payneham at 7pm on Tuesday April 21. Dr Graham Lyons will speak about diet, anti-prostate cancer foods and supplements.

MAY 19: Naturopath Faith Best will deliver a Health and Wellness Presentation.

JUNE 16: Speaker will be Ashleigh Moore, chair of Cancer Voices.

• For more information, visit the Payneham Support Group's dedicated website at <http://www.pcagsa.org.au/pages/paynehamsag.html>

Prosper Darwin Prostate Cancer Support Group

A MIXTURE of illnesses and holiday making by several key members resulted in the cancellation of the March meeting of the Prosper Darwin Support Group, but the return of group president Keith Williams from his vacation (and the improved health of those stricken during the past month) will see a welcome return of activities for the group – and a report on their progress in the next edition of Prostate Supporter.

COMING EVENT

MONDAY APRIL 13

The Darwin Group meets on the second Monday of each month, at the Harbour Room, Christ Church Cathedral, corner of Smith St and the Esplanade, Darwin, at 7.30pm.

Researching male hormones and prostate tumor growth

For the first in a series of prostate cancer researcher profiles, we look at the work of Dr Tanya Day, which is being supported by a PCFA grant.

WHILE the prostate gland holds many mysteries, one thing is clear – it needs the male hormone testosterone for its growth and nourishment. Prostate cancer cells are no different.

Many cancers hijack testosterone and use it to fuel their unwanted growth. As a result, many treatments try to starve prostate cancers of testosterone, to stop their growth.

Inside the cell, testosterone works by linking onto to a protein called the receptor protein. Without testosterone, the empty receptor is unable to switch on the genes that are involved in the day-to-day running of the cell and its growth.



Dr TANYA DAY (pictured left) is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Adelaide's Hanson Institute, studying the role of androgens and androgen signalling in prostate cancer initiation and development.

She was previously a Postdoctoral Fellow at The Prostate Centre at Vancouver General Hospital in Canada, studying Clusterin splice variants in prostate cancer.

Dr Day has also studied the effects of single and multiple low doses of radiation on cells, including prostate cells. She has demonstrated that cells respond to radiation at doses much lower than previously known to stimulate responses in cells.

Dr Day has also demonstrated that a gene change that is common in the human population did not alter a cell's response to radiation – important for setting appropriate radiation exposure levels.

Receptors with testosterone are different; their shape changes and the genes are switched on.

As long as cancer cells need testosterone for growth, the cancer is said to be hormone responsive. Most prostate cancers start life this way and can be controlled by drugs that stop testosterone activating the receptor.

All too often, however, prostate cancers become hormone resistant and can no longer be controlled by the drugs that have previously worked so well.

In this project, scientists will be looking at the role that faulty receptor proteins might play in the development and growth of prostate cancers.

It's thought that faults in receptor proteins might be one of the reasons why hormone resistant cancers emerge. For example, a faulty receptor might mean it can switch on genes even in the absence of testosterone.

It's hoped this research will lead to new ways of detecting the emerging 'hormone resistant' cancer cells and treatments for the disease.

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website www.prostate.org.au

More than two glasses of alcohol may pose a danger

An international study has found that more than two drinks of alcohol a day could trigger prostate cancer. ABC Perth's David Weber spoke with Tanya Chikritzhs of the National Drug Research Institute, who contributed to the study carried out by researchers in Australia, Canada and the United States.

TANYA CHIKRITZHS: It's the two-plus drinks-a-day drinker who's in the high-risk category for prostate cancer. We didn't find a relationship with those men drinking less than two alcoholic drinks a day and prostate cancer.

WEBER: Does more than two standard drinks a day cause prostate cancer?

CHIKRITZHS: What we can say is that there is a significant association between prostate cancer and alcohol. The thing to remember is that with prostate cancer, the causes have really escaped scientists so far. What we do know is that there is evidence pointing to environmental factors. Apart from age being an obvious risk factor, and some potential types of diets, we know that when a man moves to another country he takes on the risks associated with prostate cancer in that country. So, it's got a lot to do with environment and lifestyle. But this is one of the first studies that have been able to tie down a relationship between prostate cancer and alcohol.

WEBER: What about people who don't drink most days, yet they might drink 10 drinks on a weekend or 14 drinks in one sitting?

CHIKRITZHS: It may well be that somebody who drinks

What the researchers discovered...

THE NATIONAL Drug Research Institute study *Alcohol Use and Prostate Cancer: A Meta-Analysis*, was co-authored by Professor Kaye Fillmore and Dr Alan Bostrom from the University of California San Francisco, with Associate Professor Tanya Chikritzhs and Research Associate Richard Pascal, from the National Drug Research Institute (based at Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia); and Professor Tim Stockwell, director of the University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research of BC, Canada. The study is published in *Molecular Nutrition and Food Research*.

The researchers reviewed 35 studies examining relationships between levels of drinking and the risk of developing prostate cancer. They found that some types of studies were more likely to find the relationship ("case control" studies) and others less likely ("cohort" studies), which explains different conclusions reached by other researchers. When all types of studies were combined,

however, the authors concluded: "Men who drink two or more standard drinks a day (or 14 drinks a week) or more have about a 20 per cent greater chance of developing prostate cancer."

These findings are in marked contrast to previous reviews that found inconclusive evidence of an association between alcohol use and incidence of prostate cancer.

The authors point out that prostate cancer risk increases at almost the same level of drinking and at the same ages that alcohol is thought to have a "protective effect" for other diseases, most notably coronary heart disease. Men having two or more drinks a day should take this into account if they consume alcohol to prevent heart attacks.

The authors say further research is needed to examine the balance of health risks and benefits for different types of disease from drinking alcohol at different levels.

four on one day and none the next, and four the next day might have the same risk factors. But it might also be related to drinking patterns; it might be that somebody who drinks 14 drinks all in one sitting doesn't have the same risks. What we're saying is that the person who drinks consistently above low-risk levels will have an elevated risk of prostate cancer.

WEBER: Tanya Chikritzhs says while two drinks a day increases the risk for prostate cancer, many men think that two drinks a day can provide health benefits. She says the jury's still out on whether so-called "protective drinking" even works.

CHIKRITZHS: Consensus is growing that it's over-estimated and so it's important

for every individual to weigh up their potential risks. What's your family background? What are the issues for your lifestyle? Is it prostate cancer that worries you the most, or is it heart disease? You do have to keep in mind that the science in this area is growing and changing all the time and it really is an imperfect science.

Source: ABC Online, 14/3/09

Alice Springs Prostate Cancer Support Group

'Exercise is the closest thing we'll ever get to a miracle pill'

In Alice Springs, Professor Robert Newton gives sound advice on exercise for people of all ages, as support group convener Murray Neck reports.

AT a community and consumer forum held in Alice Springs on March 27, Professor Robert Newton, director of the Vario Health Institute at Edith Cowan University in Perth, strongly recommended for the mixed audience of 60 people – most of whom were well over 50 years of age – to commence a daily exercise program.

Professor Newton's research is very similar to other overseas studies which confirm that of males aged between 40 and 75 years, 20 per cent do not exercise, 40 per cent do insufficient exercise and only the remaining 40 per cent keep themselves reasonably fit through regular exercise.

He emphasised that it is never too late to start a beneficial exercise program. Exercise increases longevity, it adds to the quality of life, speeds



Inspired by the call to engage in a regular fitness program: (from left) Jo Black (YMCA), Professor Robert Newton, Murray Neck (Alice Springs Prostate Cancer Support Group Convener) and Leslie Reilly (Bosom Buddies).

up rehabilitation after surgery and has a protective effect on death by disease.

Exercise also accelerates the recovery of men after cancer surgery, radiation therapy or chemotherapy.

Professor Newton added "there is no pharmacological intervention that holds a greater promise of health improvement than exercise".

Aerobic exercise alone (walking or jogging) is not sufficient. It must be combined

with anabolic exercise (lifting against pressure) which can reverse loss of bone and muscle density.

It does not matter whether you join a fitness centre or have a home-based program, just as long as you have a program and stick to it.

Understanding his own lack of discipline, this convener is off to join the YMCA fitness centre and have a weight-for-age tailored program for my particular needs.

COMING EVENTS

APRIL 9 MEETING
The Alice Springs support group meets on the second Thursday of each month, from 6.30pm to 8pm in the conference room of the General Practise Network, Skinner St, Alice Springs.

Research findings and news items from around the world

Submitted by Trevor Hunt

Discovery could lead to urine test for prostate cancer

RESEARCHERS in the United States say they have made a discovery that could allow doctors to use a simple urine test to identify life threatening prostate cancer.

Up to a third of middle-aged men are thought to have traces of cancer in their prostate, though in most cases, it is harmless. However, a malignant form kills tens of thousands of men each year.

Unfortunately current screening tests cannot distinguish between the two forms of cancers. However, searches have identified a molecule found in high levels in the malignant form of the disease. Doctor Arul Chinnaiyan says this means determining the need for treatment could soon be as simple as a urine test.

"There might be screening tests for the presence of prostate cancer and

then you would then get a follow up test," he said. "That test will then tell you if you'll need treatment for that cancer, whether that'd be surgical treatment or radiation treatment. Otherwise, we would just monitor those patients."

It will take five years to see if this discovery could provide the basis of a reliable test.

• Source: BBC News Service 12/2/09

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website www.prostate.org.au

Central Australia Chapter - Council Meeting

New chapter providing access to wider support membership

Great progress is being made within the council steering the new Central Australia Chapter, as chapter secretary Bryan Hearn reports.

THE most recent meeting of the Central Australia Chapter Council in the Barossa Valley – at the The Vine Inn, Nuriootpa, on March 19 – had its desired effect of engaging with more support group members across the State.

All councilors (except for Keith Williams from Darwin) were present, courtesy of a mini bus hired for the trip from Adelaide – in addition to Paul Redman, representing the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, with Alan Hall and three other representatives of the Barossa Valley support group also in attendance as observers.

It was certainly pleasing to note the great motivation of council members and their desire to maintain momentum for the new chapter that has already been established.

It was also pleasing that John Shields has volunteered and been appointed as council treasurer. During the meeting a proposed council budget was tabled, along with a

consolidated chapter budget based on budgets submitted by all member support groups. Both documents were readily adopted, though it was noted that the included expenses of purchasing a laptop computer and digital projector by each group should be omitted, as these items have already been agreed to and funded by

“It was certainly pleasing to note the great motivation of council members and their desire to maintain momentum for the new chapter that has already been established.”

a recently acquired Federal grant.

Reports were received about potential new support groups being established at Murray Bridge and Katherine in the Northern Territory – and contact has been made with a group on Kangaroo Island in the hope of also establishing a prostate cancer support group there. Alice Springs group representative Murray Neck reported that he hopes to soon commence negotiations

for support groups to be established at Tennant Creek and Yulara. Dean Wall noted that a request has been made for the Action Group to host an awareness day at Gawler, which will hopefully lead to the establishment of a separate support group there as well.

Paul Redman was asked whether the PCFA will fund

informed that it was crucial that this information remain with the support group – it is not required by the PCFA – and that to use it for any other purpose could be contrary to the Privacy Act.

The group also had other cause for celebration – Murray Neck recently celebrated his 80th birthday and Dean Wall and his wife celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, which prompted the cutting and sharing of a large chocolate mud cake.

the hosting of a site and stall at the Paskeville Field Days, held from September 29 to October 1. This stall will be staffed by members of the SA Action Group and any other volunteers interested in helping. Funding confirmation will be forthcoming.

Questions arose about the use of support group member details contained in any databases established at individual support groups. Council members were

Future council meetings have been set for May 14 at McLaren Vale, July 16 in Alice Springs, September 17 in Darwin and November 19 in Port Pirie, underlining the great territorial spread of the chapter. The Central Australia Chapter Annual Conference is scheduled to be held in Adelaide during October and should extend over two or more days to include some training, guest speakers and the chapter’s Annual General Meeting.

Research findings and news items from around the world

Submitted by Trevor Hunt

AFTER more than 10 years of research, Associate Professor Pei Xiang Xing, a scientist with the Burnet Institute in Melbourne, has discovered an antibody that kills cancer cells in laboratory models of the disease. The findings

could be tested on humans as early as 2011. According to an article recently published in *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*, the antibody binds to a molecule responsible for the proliferation of cancer cells, creating a chain

of events that destroys the cancer cells in mice. The therapeutic effect of the antibody improved when it was combined with cancer drugs currently used to treat prostate cancer.

• Source: *The Age*, 3/2/09

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website www.prostate.org.au