



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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Additional new support groups start

Katherine and Murray Bridge are the two latest regional areas to create prostate cancer awareness and support groups.

NEW support groups are paving the way forward for greater prostate cancer awareness – a valuable consequence of the activity, discussion and planning that led to the recent creation of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia's Central Australian chapter.

The mantra to expand the network of support groups across greater geographical areas, making it more convenient for more prostate cancer patients to be involved in local groups, has been taken up across South Australia and the Northern Territory.

A new group met for the first time in Katherine on April 23, under the direction of convenor Don Lockley. A report on this meeting is on Page 11 of this newsletter.

For further information about the Katherine support group, please contact Don

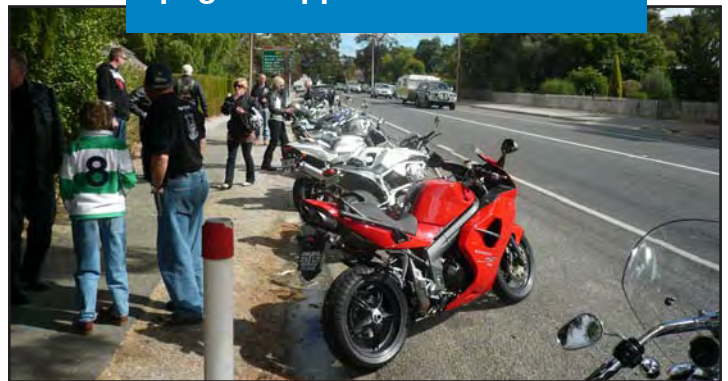
on 0401 116 851, at home on (08) 8971 1725 or email donlockley@aapt.net.au

After diligent planning by members of the South Australian Action Group, Central Australia Chapter council members and Karyn Foster of Foster Hill PR, a new support group is ready to commence in Murray Bridge, in response to local community demand.

The inaugural meeting of the Murray Bridge Prostate Cancer Support Group is being held at Our Wellbeing Place, 108 Swanport Rd, Murray Bridge from 7.30pm on May 7. The guest speaker will be Dr Andrew Mills, delivering a general discussion on men's health.

For further information about the Murray Bridge support group, please contact Ron Lehmann by phoning (08) 8532 3277, or email bronron@aapt.net.au

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



PEOPLE find all sorts of weird and wonderful ways to help raise awareness of prostate cancer. A group of motorcycle enthusiasts calling themselves the Prostators recently conducted a fundraising run from Henley Square in Adelaide's western suburban coastline to Maccelsfield in the heart of the Adelaide hills. The pictures above and below show a lot of happy supporters on the road for prostate awareness.



CONTRIBUTIONS of stories and images 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

MAY 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 May 12. At present, entry is through the front door on Greenhill Rd.

ACTION GROUP MEMBERSHIP

We welcome any member of a support group or interested supporter who feels that they might be able to help. The Action Group places an emphasis on Action and spreading the word on prostate cancer awareness.

• 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>

Supporters rally to the call for action

The Action Group has been heartened by a recent influx of new members – but more are needed, as Dean Wall reports.

RECENT pleas for more people to become involved in the activities of the Prostate Cancer Action Group have been successful. Several new people attended the group's most recent meetings, and three of these people expressed interest in continued involvement. They were welcomed by the meeting, and assured that they will find plenty to be involved with as the group's 2009 program develops.

HELP REQUIRED FOR COMING EVENTS

A site has been booked for the Yorke Peninsula Agricultural Field Days, a three-day event held from September 29 to October 1 at Paskeville. This event usually attracts about 50,000 people, and presents an ideal opportunity to publicise prostate cancer awareness.

However, an event over three days will require more manpower than the Action Group can supply, and so we

are appealing to all support group members for help. As this event is staged in the upper Yorke Peninsula, members of the Port Pirie prostate cancer support group may like to provide some of the required assistance.

It has also been suggested some Gawler-Barossa group members may be interested in helping – indeed, we will be happy to accept any help. We will require about a dozen people to man the site, with three or four people at a time serving approximately half day slots over the three days of the event.

• **South-East Awareness Evening:** The feasibility of holding an Awareness event at either Kingston, Naracoorte, or Millicent has been investigated, though it now seems likely this event will be relocated to Mt Gambier, at a date that is not yet confirmed.

• **Coromandel Valley Awareness Evening:**

Planning is well under way for an Awareness Evening to be held at Coromandel Valley, with sponsorship from the local Rotary Club. The event will be at the Blackwood Football Club on October 21. Dr Peter Sutherland has been approached to appear as principal speaker.

• **Gawler Event:** At the recent Central Australia Chapter meeting, it was suggested that an Awareness Evening should be held in the Gawler area – not only to promote awareness of prostate cancer in this large township and nearby suburban developments, but also to re-ignite interest and attract new members to the Gawler-Barossa support group.

We are currently exploring the feasibility of this, and also of conducting a similar event in the western suburbs, with a view to establishing a support group on the western side of the city. Details and dates will be announced soon.

PCFA mourns recent loss of Richard Pratt

THE Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia has paid tribute to Mr Richard Pratt following his recent death from prostate cancer.

Andrew Giles, chief executive officer of the PCFA, expressed gratitude for Mr Pratt's generous support to the foundation and in particular his work to raise awareness of prostate cancer.

Mr Pratt was diagnosed with prostate cancer several years ago and in 2007 he donated more than \$1 million to the PCFA, to help fund world-class research conducted in Australia. Mr Pratt tirelessly used his high profile as one of the nation's leading businessmen to raise awareness of prostate cancer issues.

The PCFA was able to send a small token of thanks to Mr Pratt in the days before he passed away and looks forward to offering whatever assistance is required.

"The PCFA has lost a great friend, and our thoughts are with Richard Pratt's family and friends at this difficult time," said Andrew Giles.



Mr Richard Pratt

Prostate Cancer Support and Awareness: ADELAIDE GROUP

COMING
EVENTS

MAY 18 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. A general discussion evening is planned, including an address by Paul Redman, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia's Support Group Service Manager.

• *Speaker for June 15 meeting; to be advised.*

• *Speaker for July 20 meeting will be Morgan Atkinson, to whom a Churchill Fellowship was awarded in 2008 to explore exercise rehabilitation interventions for cancer patients.*

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

Discussions with nurses critical at decision time

Nursing plays a more important role in prostate cancer issues than many patients realise, as Ian Fisk reports.

GUEST speaker for the Adelaide support group's April meeting was Kevin O'Shaughnessy, a registered nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. His presentation was an overview of a research project he conducted 2007-08 as part of an honours degree in Health Science at the University of South Australia.

Kevin gave a similar talk at the February meeting of the Payneham support group. Check Page 8 of the February-March 2009 Prostate Supporter (Volume 2 Number 2) for a detailed summary of his talk.

While answering questions at the end of his presentation, Kevin spoke of the need for prostate cancer patients and their carers to talk to a nurse at treatment decision time – and especially 18 months after treatment to assist in dealing with possible ED, incontinence, depression and other issues.

He believes this need is crucial in cases of cancer re-occurrence and also with palliative care.

Kevin is planning to undertake a PHD focused on cancer re-occurrence covering subjects such as hormone treatment. Having an earlier connection with a nurse can be helpful when later issues arise.

We were especially grateful for Kevin's contribution as the day before our meeting he had undergone an eye operation and was not feeling too good – but still insisted on coming to address our meeting!

• **The Adelaide support group still requires a volunteer librarian to look after its extensive library of literature, videos and DVDs. Any takers?**



SA's seven trained Ambassadors (from left): Ian Fisk, David Baker, David Merry, Dean Wall, Malcolm Ellis, David Roberts and Brian Marshall.

National Men's Health Ambassador Speakers

In 2008, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia received a grant from the Commonwealth Government (Department of Health and Ageing) to organise a new Men's Health Ambassador Speaker Program. As well as covering prostate issues, the new program contains an additional section on continence health.

Volunteer speakers were sought all over Australia, with training commencing in the eastern states late 2008. By early April 2009, five new South Australian volunteers attended training in Canberra. These men were also

joined for a continence training session by the two existing SA Ambassadors. The seven are spread around SA from Whyalla to many Adelaide suburbs, and these men are available to speak to interested groups.

Probus, Rostrum, Lions, Lodge groups are some of the many groups that have received Men's Health Ambassador speakers in the past. Any group, of any kind, wishing to have a speaker can ring free call 1800 206 700 and request an ambassador to attend their venue and deliver a men's health talk at no cost to the group.

Report: Ian Fisk

**COMING
EVENTS****MAY MEETING:**

The Support Group held a successful meeting on May 6 – featuring an address by vice president Malcolm Ellis, followed by a screening of the DVD *Erectile Restoration and Incontinence Management* – in the boardroom at Noarlunga Community Hospital, Alexander Kelly Drive, Noarlunga.

JUNE EVENT: The Onkaparinga group mid-year barbecue will be held at the Willunga Lions sale yard on Sunday June 7.

- 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 the **City of Onkaparinga Council**.

Sharing stories a key to travelling our journey

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

ROUND Robin general discussions at support group meetings give our members the opportunity to share their experiences so far along their Prostate Cancer journey.

As always, these events generate some lively discussion as members can talk openly about the good, and the not so good aspects of their particular treatment. It was especially good to see that a third of those present at the Onkaparinga group's discussions in April were our Number One source of support – our ladies.

Our thoughts are with those having ongoing problems as a result of their treatment, but there are good news stories to report; John Shields said that his PSA reading stays undetectable after more than five years, though there are still times when the nearest toilet seems to be too far away.

ALZHEIMERS SPEAKER

The Alzheimers Association informed us that it could not provide a speaker for the Onkaparinga group's May meeting, as it is held of an

MEN'S HEALTH POLICY INPUT

A National Men's Health Discussion Forum was held at the Stamford Grand Hotel in Glenelg on Wednesday April 22, to allow active input into further development of the Federal Government's Men's Health Policy for Australia.



ABOVE: Phyllis Shields, Beverley and Malcolm Ellis at the Stamford Grand forum in April.

Onkaparinga group vice president Malcolm Ellis, (also chairman of the Central Australia Chapter of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, and a PCFA Ambassador) with his wife Beverley, and Onkaparinga group president and treasurer John Shields with his wife Phyllis, attended the event with about 100 men and women who shared a keen interest in Men's Health issues and voiced their hopes to rectify the glaring absence of men's health issues from national policy.

Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, State and National Political representatives will be in absolute unison on men's health issues, and that improved policy positions will have become law.

evening and that we are "way out there" in Noarlunga.

They did say, however, that one of the Alzheimers Association speakers will be in the southern region addressing a day meeting – at

Seaford Active Seniors, on the corner of Main St and Grand Boulevard, Seaford, from 1.30pm on Tuesday May 19 – and that our group members are welcome to attend this event.

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

- A doctor and his wife were having a big argument at breakfast, which turned spiteful and personal. "You aren't so good in bed either," he shouted as he stormed off to his surgery. By mid-morning, the doctor reconsidered what he'd said, decided he had better make amends and phoned home.

After many rings, his wife picked up the phone. "What took you so long to answer?" he asked. "I was in bed," his wife said. "What were you doing in bed this late?" said the doctor. "Getting a second opinion," replied his wife.

Mitcham Prostate Cancer Support Group

Discussing sexual healing

Unspoken for too long, the finer aspects of men's sexual health is a topic of great interest to support group members, as Mitcham group chairperson Terry Harbour reports.

DR Joe Abadia from the Men's Health Clinic at Seaton, who has specialised in all forms of treatment for men's sexual health for the past decade, spoke on Prostate and Sexual Health to a very interested crowd at the Mitcham support group's April 23 meeting.

Dr Abadia spoke about erections, explaining the rather complicated processes that need to be working together properly to enable an erection to occur.

He showed an animation video that showed the correlation between the nervous system and blood system to cause erections.

He explained some of the causes of erectile dysfunction (ED) and the importance of having regular checks for blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes, all of which can lead to ED. As other speakers have pointed out in previous addresses to the Mitcham group, Dr Abadia said that ED could indicate other health problems, particularly heart problems.

Dr Abadia went on to discuss the lack of nocturnal erections, of which men have up to five a night. These erections during sleep serve a critical role of providing oxygen rich blood to the penis, keeping the cells of the corpus cavernosum healthy. Should these night erections stop or decrease in intensity, there is a need to seek early treatment before ED develops in full.

As part of his presentation, Dr Abadia handed around several devices and items designed to assist those experiencing ED to varying degrees.

Members present were able to see up close items that they may have only read about on occasions: penile constriction rings, vacuum erection devices, penile prostheses, types of syringes for injection treatment and boxes that contain the pills Viagra, Cialis and Levitra.

Whilst the various devices were being passed around, Dr Abadia explained their use and associated costs, also explaining the pros and cons of each. This information was

very well received by our group.

Concluding his presentation, Dr Abadia spoke on the issue of intimacy and loving relationships being an intimate part of sexual life of a couple, emphasising that the sex act alone is not "the be all and end all" of that relationship.

Quite a number of questions followed the talk, reflecting strong interest in an important topic that was rarely discussed only a few years ago.

For this event, the Mitcham support group welcomed newcomer Michael Vaughan and also warmly welcomed four members of the Barossa and Gawler Support Group. Chairman of that group, Alan Hall together with members Pat and Peter Kent and John Krahlung braved cold and wet weather to drive from the Barossa to join with us for the night. We hope that in the not too distant future we might be able to reciprocate the visit.

SURVEY FORMS

JEFF Roberts advised he had received back all the

COMING EVENTS

MAY 28 MEETING

The next Mitcham Support Group meeting will be held on Thursday May 28, in the Colonel Light Gardens RSL club rooms at 4 Prince George Parade, Colonel Light Gardens, from 7pm. Guest speaker will be Ms Michelle Hogan, Health Coordinator, Diabetes SA, who will speak on "All you need to know about diabetes – a general overview."

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

survey forms handed out a couple of meetings ago. The responses will help ensure the support group can provide an appropriate meeting style and content to satisfy the needs of our members.

Research findings and news items from around the world ... Submitted by Trevor Hunt

Vitamin D linked to reduced prostate cancer death risk

ELEVATED serum levels of vitamin D may be associated with a reduced risk of death from prostate cancer, researchers reported in the British Journal of Cancer. In a study of 160 prostate cancer patients, those with medium and high serum levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D (calcidiol)

were at 67 per cent and 84 per cent decreased risk of death from prostate cancer, respectively, compared with patients who had a low level. Among the 97 men receiving hormone therapy, medium and high calcidiol levels were associated with 82 per cent and 91 per cent decreased risk.

Researchers concluded that serum calcidiol levels may be involved in disease progression, and this patient group may benefit from increasing the serum level of vitamin D if it is below 50 nmol/L.

Source: Renal & Urology News

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

Barossa and Gawler Prostate Cancer Support Group

A meeting of reciprocal interests

Even foul weather couldn't stop the Barossa/Gawler group's visit to a city support group meeting, as Alan Hall reports.

IN accordance with the wishes of several of its members, the Barossa/Gawler Group arranged a visit to the April meeting of the Mitcham Group instead of conducting the group's own regular monthly meeting.

This was viewed as an opportunity to observe how another group conducts its meetings and also to meet other people with similar problems and interests.

Most in the Barossa support group have been active members for many years

– several since the group's inception in 1998 – and this visit to another group promised to open up new ideas and extend our horizons for what is possible with further prostate cancer promotion and support measures for sufferers.

Unfortunately, nature intervened on the night of the meeting with the combination of heavy rain and night driving deterring all but two of the designated drivers. However, those who did attend the Mitcham meeting enjoyed a very worthwhile occasion,

with an excellent guest speaker and the opportunity to mingle with Mitcham members. A selection of platters arranged for supper by Mitcham chairman Terry Harbour was greatly appreciated and helped fortify our drivers for a two-hour drive back to the Barossa.

The concept of reciprocal meetings among groups has merit and could well become common practice as the network of support groups continues to expand in South Australia.

COMING EVENT

JUNE MEETING

- The Barossa and Gawler support group will not conduct a formal meeting during May.
- The next group meeting will be on Tuesday, June 16. Details of venue and programme will appear in next month's edition of the *Prostate Supporter* newsletter.

Research findings and news items from around the world

Submitted by Trevor Hunt

Normal cells in blood may help cancers to spread

NORMAL cells in the blood that help to heal wounds may also create the right conditions for cancer cells to spread, according to US researchers.

Fibrocytes – blood cells derived from bone marrow – could explain how healthy cells become habitats for cancer says Dr Hendrik van Deventer of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

His research, published in the *American Journal of Pathology*, involved investigating cells that help prepare distant tissue to accept metastasis, the process by which cancer spreads to other parts of the body.

He believes this cell might be a fibrocyte, as it has characteristics that make it a cancer metastasis-promoting cell.

Van Deventer began to suspect

fibrocytes while he was working with mice that were genetically engineered to lack the cell receptor CCR5, a cellular doorway that helps control the migration of cells through the body.

CCR5 is the same entry point used by the human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS, to get inside immune cells.

The genetically altered mice, which also had skin cancer melanoma, tended to get fewer metastatic tumors than normal mice with melanoma.

Van Deventer's team methodically injected these altered mice with various types of cells from normal mice to form more tumors – and a fibrocyte worked. When van Deventer injected the mice with 60,000 of the cells, the rate of metastases nearly doubled.

In healthy humans, fibrocytes travel through the bloodstream to injured areas, where they produce changes that help repair wounds. Van Deventer suspects these changes may help cancer grow.

In his experiments, van Deventer noticed that mice injected with fibrocytes started making matrix metalloproteinase 9, or MMP-9, an enzyme that is known to promote cancer.

If fibrocytes are involved, a potential treatment may already exist in drugs that block the MMP-9 enzyme. The drug side effects led to the drug being abandoned, though Dr Van Deventer believes that because the MMP enzyme works in conjunction with CCR5, a new drug that blocks both would allow doctors to reduce the dose of the MMP-9 blocker.

• Source: Reuters Health, 7/1/09

McLaren Districts Prostate Cancer Support Group

Regular testing, diet and exercise comprise the answer to wellbeing

Research data reinforces the understanding that maintaining good general health is crucial to beating prostate cancer and other diseases, as Bryan Hearn reports.

DR Carole Pinnock, principal research scientist from the General Repatriation Hospital, Daw Park, provided information at the McLaren and Districts group meeting on April 16 about the outcomes of two recent and very wide-reaching screening programs undertaken in different parts of the world (for a detailed response to these tests, see the report on Page 12 of this newsletter).

In the United States, 76,000 men were screened annually over seven years, and in Europe a mass screening program was undertaken over 11 years involving 162,000 men who were tested every four years.

As a result of early detection achieved through this program, death rates from prostate cancer was reduced by 25 per cent. However, this program did highlight the high cost involved in mass screening. It indicated that from every 1410 men screened, 48 could expect to receive a positive PSA reading and one life would be saved.

COMING EVENT

THURSDAY MAY 21

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, May 21. Guest speaker will be local area nutritionist Debra Cooper.

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

Mass screenings such as these do not yet exist in South Australia, but the group was told that every man who, after being informed, can receive an annual PSA test with Medicare benefits. This is a particularly good outcome for men in what are considered to be in “high risk” situations with a history of prostate cancer in the family. As it is so often emphasised, the answer lies with men to GET TESTED.

Dr Pinnock commented on developments in the treatment and prevention of prostate cancer, mentioning that the need for regular exercise, a diet high in vegetables and maintaining sensible weight not only helps to fight prostate cancer but also with cardio

vascular health. Dr Pinnock explained that a link has been established between heart disease and prostate cancer and demonstrated with slides how the intake of cholesterol may be linked with the development and progression of prostate cancer. She explained that drugs known as statins can help reduce the level of cholesterol in blood, and that food is preferable to achieve balanced nutrition rather than multi-vitamin supplements, particularly where these are taken in high doses.

Within a survey of 300,000 men, some risks were identified with high-level use of multi vitamins involving at least seven tablets per day. A process known as “apoptosis”

was graphically demonstrated in a powerpoint demonstration, which showed how cells react to an absence of testosterone and what actions cells take on their own behalf to counteract this situation. Abiraterone is a drug being developed to bring about this process and results from its Phase 3 testing are looking very good. It is expected this drug will be available to the general public in the near future.

Support group members asked many questions relating to their own treatment situations that corresponded with descriptions by Dr Pinnock during her presentation.

Of special interest was a comment from one member about how well he had recently been treated during a visit to a doctor, who had taken the time to go through all his cholesterol and PSA charts and explain what the results meant from a health point of view. The patient found this approach most refreshing and it was obvious from comments made by other members that this approach is clearly the exception rather than the rule.

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

• FOUR large insurance companies agreed to amalgamate their businesses. They decided they needed a new logo and engaged a company to produce something suitable. In due course, a graphic designer arrived at the insurance

head office and produced a shield divided into quarters. In each quarter was a double bed occupied by a couple. “What on earth is this?” asked the chairman. “Quite simple,” replied the designer. “The first quarter is a man in bed with his wife; that’s

Legal and General. The second is a man with his fiancée; that’s Mutual Trust. The third quarter represents a man in bed with his secretary; that’s Employers’ Liability, and the fourth is a man in bed with a prostitute, which is Commercial Union.”

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or visit the website www.prostate.org.au

Payneham Prostate Cancer Support Group

Delving deeper into your diet

Expert advice set the Payneham group thinking about what they eat, as Phil Davis reports.

GUEST speaker for April, Dr Graham Lyons – a dedicated supporter of Prostate Cancer Support Groups for many years – spoke about effective diets and he emphasised that no one food will prevent or, for that matter, cause cancer.

Dr Lyons, who majored in epidemiology and nutrition, produced a PhD through the University of Adelaide in 2004 titled *High selenium wheat: Bio-fortification for*

better health, in addition to co-authoring seven books through the the 1990s, mostly on global environment, agricultural, population, economic and health issues.

He said that to have a real impact on reducing cancer risk, individuals need to make a concerted effort to control their weight and to be active with regular forms of exercise. Some basic prevention rules are obvious: Don't smoke and limit the amount of alcohol,

for males, to no more than two glasses of red wine each day.

A large proportion of the daily diet should consist of a variety of different vegetables, fruit and grains – especially selenium-enriched grain, as this will lower the risk of suffering from cancer, heart disease, diabetes and certainly improve our general health and wellbeing.

Dr Lyons also said it would be prudent to limit daily

consumption of dairy products, meat, especially processed meats, and to take greater care with how we cook, using more olive oil and choosing fish more often.

• *Dr Lyons' handout paper is reproduced in the current edition of the Payneham support group's newsletter, to provide a very accurate account of his presentation. To obtain a copy, phone Phil Davis on 8263 2217.*

A privilege to share amazing stories

By PHIL DAVIS

THE Payneham support group enjoyed a very busy meeting in April, during which I was reminded that since being involved in support groups, I have met many wonderful people who have shared their extraordinary stories.

During the April meeting, Peter enlightened the group as to how he has coped with being treated with taxotere. He is one of a few males among us where androgen deprivation therapy had not worked all that well, and towards the end of last year he had been prescribed the medication taxotere.

Peter described the treatment as being quite toxic, with significant side effects, but it had been quite successful in lowering his PSA level, which is excellent news.

Taxotere is a very expensive drug, which had not been available on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme for males



Payneham support group attendances remain strong.

diagnosed with prostate cancer until about 18 months ago. It is very heartening to see how it is benefiting Peter and others.

Another extraordinary story is the prostate cancer journey of Johann Felusch, who joined the Payneham group in March. With his permission, his story appears on Page 9 of this month's newsletter.

The group was also amazed by the resilience of Doug, who, in company with his wife Kay, attended our meeting on the way home from hospital after receiving chemotherapy.

I believe that physical health and psychological wellbeing should be among our greatest priorities in life – and because of this, I feel that support groups will always have an important role to play.

It is my gut feeling that when many men are diagnosed with prostate cancer and asked if they are doing OK tend to say they're fine, irrespective of their true feelings.

Support groups give these men the chance to speak openly about how they really feel – and that's important.

COMING EVENTS

MAY MEETING

The Payneham Support Group will next meet in the Payneham RSL Clubrooms, 360 Payneham Rd, Payneham at 7pm on Tuesday May 19. Naturopath Faith Best will deliver a Health and Wellness Presentation.

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

• *For more information, or just to talk over any problems, please phone Phil Davis, (8263 2217), Peter Woodrow, (8263 5556) or Arthur Seager, (8289 4180), or visit the Payneham Support Group's dedicated website at www.psapayneham.org*

Alice Springs Prostate Cancer Support Group

THE Alice Springs support group will be plotting the progress of titanic 66-year-old David Baird in his efforts to push a wheelbarrow raising money for prostate cancer and breast cancer research from Alice Springs to Uluru and back in 21 days from May 1 – a distance of 920km. We'll report on the efforts of this true cancer awareness crusader in the next *Prostate Supporter*.

COMING EVENT

MAY 14 MEETING, with Dr Graham Sinclair. 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.

Payneham Prostate Cancer Support Group

Johann's lengthy journey

Phil Davis profiles one inspiring prostate cancer sufferer's continuing journey.

FACING your own mortality is a formidable thought – and many have it forced upon them when prostate cancer is diagnosed. Payneham Prostate Cancer Support Group member Johann Felusch first realised he had a problem when visiting the toilet at a suburban shopping centre in 2002. Johann realised it took him far too long to urinate, especially with a young grandson waiting patiently for his grandfather to finish.

He visited a local doctor, who conducted a digital rectal examination and found that his prostate was hard, so took blood and urine samples for analysis – which showed a PSA reading of 12. He was referred to the urological department of a suburban hospital for follow-up treatment.

According to Johann's diary he has maintained through his ordeal, he visited the recommended urologist on August 28, 2002, who reviewed his situation, examined Johann's prostate and advised that he needed a biopsy.

Several days after the biopsy, the urologist delivered distressing news; Johann had prostate cancer. He had an abdomen and bone scan, which showed no evidence of cancer in his bones, though the urologist advised him to see a radiologist.

He visited the radiologist on October 4, who explained he had a Gleason score of seven and that the cancer was on both sides of the prostate. Johann would have preferred to have had a



The ever-smiling Johann Felusch.

radical prostatectomy but was advised that the most appropriate treatment would be hormone therapy followed by radiotherapy. In October 2002 he started taking Androcur 100 and had an implant of Zoladex. Before the hormone treatment, it had taken him 3:20 seconds to urinate. Treatment saw this situation improve and his PSA fell to 4.5.

In late December 2002 and January 2003, Johann had radiotherapy, which further reduced his PSA to 3.6. However, after the radiotherapy he experienced difficulties with his bowel and further investigation indicated, as Johann describes, "his intestines had gone stiff".

Johann's PSA started rising again and reached 24 by September 2004. His urologist again prescribed Androcur 100, and after taking the medication, his PSA dropped to 3.1.

By April 2005, Johann's PSA had fallen to 2.5 but then commenced to rise. he wrote letters to Assistant Professor Stricker, Chairman of Urology, director of uro-oncology and director of St Vincent's

Prostate Cancer Centre at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney. Stricker telephoned Johann and provided significant comfort, guidance and information.

As Johan's PSA continued to rise (15.7) he consulted another urologist at North Adelaide in March 2006 and had another scan, which indicated little spots of cancer from his lumbar to his neck, while the scan of his right lung indicated asbestosis and his liver had a 1cm spot similar in appearance to cancer.

He was again prescribed three monthly Zoladex implants and by July 13 his PSA had dropped to 0.6.

At Johann's request in September 2006, he had another scan conducted by another company. The report did not show definitive uptake of localised metastatic disease in his back, the lungs had a small amount of calcified pleural plaque formation, and the spot on the liver was a cyst. Johann felt elated with the results and the additional scans justified his desire to know his exact medical situation.

Since those scans he has remained on hormone therapy and his PSA had been stable until recently.

On April 15, he had scans where the same lesions were evident, which may require some modification to his treatment program.

Johan has maintained a friendly, happy and easy-going disposition throughout his prostate cancer journey, showing determination, persistence and resilience to combat challenges that he and his family have faced so far.

A different approach to prostate pathology

The popular perception that prostate cancer is just one disease is wrong, according to Australian prostate pathology expert, Dr Ronald Cohen of Perth.

AFTER 20 years of examining prostate cancer tissue, Dr Ronald Cohen says there are different forms of the disease. “A man could have prostate cancer for 50 years that does nothing, yet another man could have prostate cancer for three years that kills him. If it were the same disease everyone who had it would die from it”.

Dr Cohen is director of pathology at UroPath, a tissue bank that receives 90 per cent of prostate glands removed in Western Australia – about 700 prostates each year – and between 4000 and 5000 prostate biopsies are also banked every year.

Dr Cohen has observed different forms of prostate cancer in action. It is generally recognised that some prostate cancers are aggressive, while some do not display much activity during a man’s lifetime but little is known about why this is so. Dr Cohen’s research suggests that the difference can be determined, in part, by the location of the cancer within the prostate.

The prostate has four zones, and cancer can grow in three of them simultaneously, though the zone in which it predominates is known as the index cancer. He says this zone is important in diagnosis and treatment.

Through the tissue bank, Dr Cohen has been tracking cancers according to their zone, and his early findings have changed treatment in WA and reduced the number of surgical failures (defined when PSA starts rising again after the prostate has been removed – an indication that cancer is still present).

From examination of surgically removed prostates, it is known that 5 per cent of index tumors occur in the central zone (CZ) of the

gland, 70 per cent occur in the peripheral zone (PZ) and 25 per cent in the transitional zone (TZ). Most pathologists can only tell the zone of origin when they have the prostate gland lying on the laboratory bench, though Dr Cohen has been distinguishing the zone of origin from a biopsy sample before the prostate is removed.

Biopsy tissue is usually fixed with formalin, but when Dr Cohen began experimenting with alternatives a decade ago, he discovered something that had never been seen in prostate tissue before – red dots floating in the fluid of the cell. Usually, when prostate

tissue is fixed in formalin and stained, the nucleus is blue and the cytoplasm (fluid) is a pale watery pink.

When prostate tissue is fixed with the new fixative and stained, the nucleus is blue but the cytoplasm is full of bright red granules. The old fixative, formalin, dissolves out these granules, leaving barely detectable little holes. As these granules are little packets of all the things that the prostate produces, Dr Cohen calls them prostate secretory granules.

Since surgeons have been doing wider neck resection, failure rates for TZ cancers have decreased from 19 per cent to 7 per cent in Western Australia.

He observed that when a cancer occurs in the transition zone, the granules remain in place, but when a cancer occurs in the peripheral zone, they disappear. This enabled him to distinguish between the two zones on biopsy, and he can inform the surgeon, at the pre-operative stage, about where the cancer originates. Drawing on knowledge from the tissue bank, the surgeon can sometimes shape the operation accordingly.

TZ cancers are usually large, low-grade tumors, with a high PSA. Theoretically, they should provide a better outcome than PZ tumors, but from the tissue bank data, Dr

Cohen saw they were faring equally badly. “It was worked out why that was, treatment was modified, and now those men are doing a lot better,” he says. “TZ cancer spreads out of the prostate in a different way to PZ cancer. We realized that doing a wider bladder neck resection with TZ cancer could clear the disease more effectively. This is not usually required with PZ cancers.” He says since surgeons have been doing the wider neck resection, failure rates for TZ cancers

have decreased from 19 per cent to 7 per cent in WA.

Dr Cohen can usually distinguish PZ from TZ cancers on biopsy and although he has published the method several times, he has not heard of it being used elsewhere. Last year he published a paper in *The Journal of Urology* on central zone cancer, showing how aggressive it is and that it has a 70 per cent surgical failure rate. He says the central zone is difficult to biopsy, and is usually avoided by surgeons doing the biopsy.

Source: Summarised from an article by Jill Margo in the Australian Financial Review.

Darwin and Katherine Prostate Cancer Support Groups

Darwin stretches its wings to support new Katherine group

The growth of prostate cancer awareness and support in the Northern Territory continues, as Darwin president and Ambassador Keith Williams reports.

A NEW support group in Katherine conducted its first public meeting on April 23, with help from visiting Prosper Darwin members Keith Williams with his wife Pat, and Ray Weir with his wife Annette.

While the number of people attending this first meeting was small, the outlook for the new group is promising.

The Darwin group will continue to sponsor the Katherine group until it is firmly established.

The next Katherine group meeting will be at the Filipino Social Hall, 29 Giles St, Katherine from 7pm on Wednesday, May 13.

• NEWS FROM DARWIN: Convenor Keith Williams reports that after the trials and tribulations that resulted in the cancellation of the March general meeting, the Prosper Darwin support group is now back on track.

The group's April meeting featured general discussion and the screening of a DVD on erectile dysfunction.

April was also busy for the Darwin group due to the arrival of the Rumble 2 – the Top Motorcycle Ride from Rockhampton in Queensland to Darwin.

More than 120 people on 80 bikes participated (including Bundy the blue cattle dog, the fastest dog in Australia).



At the first Katherine support group meeting: (above) Don Lockley and Keith Williams; (left) and Col Pfchirpig and Russ Smith; (below) Rex Jeffrey with Ray and Annette Weir.



Above: Nemia Lockley, Bless Jeffrey and Don Lockley on supper duty after the first Katherine support group meeting.

Darwin group members attended the civic reception for the riders on April 20, and the awareness evening that was put on by the travelling PCFA Queensland group on April 22.

COMING EVENTS

MONDAY MAY 11

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.

HEALTH IN MEN PROGRAM Toolbox Meetings 2009

Robson Lecture Theatre
Eleanor Harrald Building
Fridays 12 – 12.45pm

April 3: 'Knowing yourself inside and out' National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and other common bowel problems
Guest speakers: Kathy Pietris, National Bowel Cancer Screening Program & Dr Matthew Lawrence, RAH Surgical Consultant

May 22: Men, Healthy Eating and Food Labels
Guest speaker: Julie Hawthorn, Nutritionist, RAH Health Promotion

July 3: Exercise for Mature Men
Guest speaker: Exercise Physiologist, CPAA

August 14: Nuts & Bolts of the Prostate
Guest speaker: Prof Villis Marshall, Clinical Director Surgical Specialties RAH

September 18: 'Good sleep, bad sleep, no sleep?' Everything you need to know about sleep and sleep problems but were too tired to ask.
Guest speaker: Dr Andrew Thornton, Hospital Scientist, Thoracic Medicine RAH

October 30: Health-Checks and Self-Checks, prevention in practice
Guest speaker: Barbara Putz, Working Health Coordinator, RAH Health Promotion

Sponsored by Pfizer
Light refreshments included

For more information or to book your place
Royal Adelaide Hospital – Health Promotion Unit
Central Northern Adelaide Health Service
North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: 8222 5193

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Making sense of conflicting new prostate cancer research

Two new reports that offer conflicting views on PSA effectiveness demand closer scrutiny, as Dr Tom Keenan, professor at The University of Calgary reports.

INCREASING numbers of people make important health and lifestyle choices based on the latest, often widely reported, medical research. But what happens when the research contradicts itself? This happened recently, as two large and separate studies gave apparently contradictory findings about whether PSA testing actually saves lives.

A European study found that PSA-based screening reduced the rate of death from prostate cancer by 20 per cent. An American study concluded that the rate of death from prostate cancer did not differ between two study groups, one of which was offered annual PSA testing.

Dr Bryan Donnelly, a staff urologist, researcher and chairman of the Prostate Cancer Institute of Calgary, Canada, has robust views about such contradictions. "Those of us that are in this game long enough to remember just want to vomit when we hear people speak negatively about the PSA test," fumes Dr Donnelly. "When I started to do urology 36 years ago, 90 per cent of the men that we diagnosed with prostate cancer had advanced disease. It either had spread to their bones or it had grown into the surrounding structures and we could not do a curative treatment for them.

"Today, somewhere between

75 and 90 per cent of the men that we diagnose with prostate cancer have localised disease that we can treat with curative intent." He is confident that the PSA test, widely used since the 1980s, is the largest single factor behind this change.

How does he explain the current contradiction in study results? "The two studies are quite different," he says. "The American study was a study of about 150,000 people – men and women with a family history of prostate, lung,

Dr Donnelly says we should celebrate the virtues of the PSA test, adding that "if there was a similar blood test for breast cancer, they would be shouting about its benefits from the rooftops and there would be no debate about using it."

colon or ovarian cancer. If you look at the men's side, what they were trying to do was to compare one group that gets PSA testing and digital rectal examinations annually versus one group that doesn't get either of these things done."

Unfortunately for the researchers, their control group wasn't very good; more than half of the men got the PSA test anyway. "In the United States, there are not a lot of men who have not had PSA testing," says Donnelly, who also believes the study did not run long enough to show accurate outcomes.

By contrast, men in Europe do not routinely receive PSA

testing, so they provided a much better control group. The multi-centre European study concluded that PSA screening does save lives, mainly by finding prostate cancer at an early stage when it's still confined to the gland and can be treated.

The main objection by those opposing routine PSA testing is that it will cause some men to undergo unnecessary procedures, such as biopsies and even prostate cancer treatments, which can cause

side effects such as urinary incontinence and impotence. Indeed, the European authors noted that PSA screening "was associated with a high risk of over-diagnosis".

Dr Donnelly says a big difference exists between over-diagnosis and over-treatment. "If you make the diagnosis, you don't have to treat, but at least you and the patient know what's going on, and you can monitor the situation much more accurately and you can make an informed decision."

He notes that side effects only occur in a minority of cases. The alternative, a possibly fatal cancer going untreated to an advanced stage, is a lot

worse. "Dead men don't get very good erections," he jokes grimly, "though I guess they don't have to worry about incontinence."

Dr Donnelly sees good news on the horizon. "What we really need now is some biochemical test that will enable us to know that one particular cancer is going to progress and kill a guy, and another one is not going to progress and kill a guy." He says researchers are working on this, and predicts that such a test will be achieved within one to five years.

Dr Donnelly says we should celebrate the virtues of the PSA test, adding that "if there was a similar blood test for breast cancer, they would be shouting about its benefits from the rooftops and there would be no debate about using it."

Aside from getting regular PSA testing, experts are now encouraging men to eat fish. A study in the April issue of *Clinical Cancer Research* looked at men with a high genetic risk of prostate cancer. Researchers from the University of California found that men with the highest intake of omega-3 fatty acids, found in such oily fish as salmon, had a 63 per cent lower risk of getting aggressive prostate cancer.

Source: *Calgary Herald*, 2/4/09