

janssen 4 Patients



YOU DON'T TELL YOUR PALS ABOUT IT (STANISŁAW, AGED 64)

You've told me your story was not a simple one. How did you feel when you learned you have prostate cancer?

In general, patients seek medical help when they become

symptomatic, they are monitored by a urologist, but they don't know anything about the basics, for example, what PSA is. In my case, I had my PSA tested on my own initiative because I knew men who are over 50 should have such a test done. The results were normal. It was not until much later when I started urinate a lot more often. That worried me and I went to a urologist. I had my PSA retested and it was elevated.

How did you react to this result? Did you tell your relatives?

No, unfortunately no. I have just divorced, and you don't tell your pals about it. I believe a man would rather confide to a woman than to any of his pals.

This confirms that men only reluctantly discuss any health issues with their friends?

Yes, they sometimes do, but not too often. Unless they are over 60. When they are 40 or 50 years old, they don't talk about diseases.

You had to cope with your condition all alone. What was the course of your disease?

My doctor prescribed pharmacotherapy and indeed, my PSA initially dropped, but when I discontinued my medications, it again increased dramatically. I was referred for a biopsy. This was my second biopsy, so I knew what it would feel. The first biopsy showed I had prostate hypertrophy, but with no neoplastic manifestations. It lulled me into a false sense of security. When it turned out I had to wait 3 months to have another biopsy, I didn't panic. On the eve of this procedure I found I had another significant increase in my PSA, which worried me a lot. The biopsy confirmed I had malignant prostate cancer.

How did you feel at this very moment? How did you mentally cope with your diagnosis?

This came as a shock. My eyes watered. It was very difficult. My

thoughts were dark, I wasn't in the best of my moods.

Did you know anything about your therapy and its consequences?

As far as I remember I knew back then that there were two treatment options - either surgery or radiation therapy. My urologist asked me to choose between surgical treatment and radiation therapy. I opted for surgery. I knew nothing of hormone therapy.

Were you still alone with your condition?

No, I had a friend. She supported me in my illness. We've known each other for many years and we used to talk about it. I had someone to open myself to, vent my feelings. That was very important.

Did you feel you are well informed about the diagnostics and therapy? Or were you missing anything?

I should have had a long, deep conversation with a urologist about his suspicions. Otherwise I wouldn't have waited for so long with my second biopsy. Later, nobody explained to me what were the treatment options and what they entailed, as correlated with the results of my biopsy and PSA. Perhaps I should have had radiation therapy or hormone therapy initiated much sooner.

Did anyone warn you about the side effects of therapy? Has anyone talked to you about it?

Yes, an oncologist explains what the therapy involves. She warned me I was at a risk of metastases and therefore hormone therapy was a must following radiation therapy. I knew it could affect my sexual life but I was single at that time and I consented to the therapy without any hesitation.

Do you think psychological support given by other people translates into therapy?

I believe so. It does matter. Indeed, a patient feels the need to talk

to someone, and a psychologist is well trained to listen to you and talk to you in a professional way. Today, a psychologist is a person I can always turn to and talk to about the things that stress me out.

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