

Personal Experience with Prostate Cancer

Introduction

From a routine medical check-up in February 2009 I discovered my PSA was 9.8. PSA or Prostate Specific Antigen is a substance in the blood which generally increases when there is a cancerous tumour in the prostate gland. Apparently there is little to worry about when the PSA is below 2.5 and everything to worry about if it reaches 20. A biopsy in April 2009 confirmed that I had prostate cancer. My family doctor told me it would undoubtedly need serious treatment because the tumour would grow, but the problem was not yet urgent. He advised me to have the treatment within a year.

Being a researcher all my professional life I recorded the progress of my condition diligently. Over the next ten months I spent more than 300 hours on the internet collecting information about my condition. I discovered a great deal which helped me understand important aspects of my condition. In this account, references on the more specific topics are cited, but it was not thought necessary to provide those on the more general statements.

From what I learned, radiation looked like the best option. I also consulted ten oncologists and urologists in several towns around Brazil. Maybe it was not surprising that the surgeons said surgery was the only solution and radiologists said it must be radiation.

I believe my problem has been totally resolved; my PSA has been low for more than five years since my trouble. Therefore, I decided to write of my experience in the hope that it might help others who are facing the same kind of trouble.

Cancer as I understand it

To be able to tackle the problem effectively I felt it important to understand the basics of cancer. The cells in our body are dividing all the time. This is what we know as growth and the natural replacement and repair of tissues. In all of us during our entire

lives some cells divide wrongly. This is normal. In a healthy person the immune system identifies these faulty cells and eliminates them. Problems arise when they are not removed. If they are left unchecked they can grow into a cancerous tumour. This failure can come about in several ways.

1. If the body's immune system does not function efficiently it might not initiate the removal of the faulty cells. The immune system can be damaged when a person suffers stress over a long period.

2. In some situations the body might produce an excessive amount of almost all cells and this will necessarily increase the number of faulty ones. This can be a result of consuming dairy products and egg yolks. Both contain substantial amounts of natural growth hormones. These are substances that stimulate cell division. Stimulating cell division in a young animal is beneficial, but not in an adult. Milk is the natural food of young mammals that are growing. Humans are the only adult animals that consume large amounts of milk.

3. The body might produce an excessive proportion of faulty cells. This can be a result of intense radiation or exposure to carcinogenic chemicals like the heterocyclic aromatic amines found in charred and burnt food.

In many and perhaps in all cancers, two or all three of these factors work together to allow the tumour to develop.

My Condition

I have not smoked for more than forty years and have never consumed any other seriously carcinogenic substances so I very much doubt that they are an issue. My biggest problem was stress so the first question was how to minimize it. From the information I gathered from the Internet obviously there had also to be major changes in my diet. On the day I discovered that my PSA was high there were four types of cheese, two of yoghurt and two of ice cream in my fridge.

Stress

Eliminating most of the stress from one's life is surprisingly easy when one has to confront the alternative. Continued stress dam-

ages one's health so badly that it can have terrible effects. Friends and relatives understood and often helped out. Other people don't matter so much. I now try to avoid stressful people and situations. At times it was not easy and sometimes it cost me money. For example, if it was inconvenient to pay a bill on time then I paid it late and had to pay an excess charge; but so what?

Having a blood pressure gauge at home helps one control the stress. When one is stressed the blood pressure rises and this can happen without one feeling it.

Diet

I talked to ten oncologists and urologists about my condition. I asked all of them about the influence of diet on cancer. All insisted that diet is important for prevention, but is unimportant once a tumour has formed. I am told this is the generally accepted medical opinion, though not all hold to that view.¹ None was swayed by the argument that in the majority of cases their position is illogical. They are limiting their thinking to the formation of a first tumour and ignoring metastasis. From what I have read, prostate cancer kills no-one directly; it is the metastasis which is deadly. With any cancer, a diet that will reduce the chance of it spreading must be a wise strategy. Having said that, I accept that diet is unlikely to have any effect on the condition of someone who doesn't stop smoking cigarettes.

Once I had discovered I had a tumour I made radical changes to my diet. I cut out red meat, dairy products, processed food, drinks in plastic containers and alcohol entirely. I avoided glucose, bread and biscuits as much as possible. My diet was almost entirely fish, chicken, fresh vegetables and fresh fruits. Every day I took 4 or 5 grams of vitamin C, multi-vitamins, multi-minerals, B complex vitamins, Omega 3 and selenium. I drank green and black tea, soursop leaf tea, fresh fruit juices and lots of water. I did everything I thought might help. After all, this wasn't a scientific experiment with controls (of which I've conducted many). This was literally a matter of life or death.

After eleven months on this diet (February 2009 to January 2010) my PSA had dropped from 9.8 to 8.5. Obviously it would take some years at that rate for the PSA to drop to an acceptable level, but it was very encouraging that it was moving in the right direction and the tumour had not metastasized. To be frank, after 15 months on the diet it was difficult to face fish and chicken, and I was delighted to eat beef and pork and a bit of salami and gorgonzola again.

Here is a summary of the radical diet I followed (with a few comments).

Good Foods and Drinks

-Free range chicken, fish, shrimps and whole wheat flour are said to be acceptable.

-Polyphenols and other substances in plants are said to help reduce cancerous tumours.² Many foods and drinks are recommended. They are black and green tea, apples, avocados, several red fruits like water melon, tomatoes, guavas and grapes. Vegetables include beetroot, carrots, aubergine, sweet pepper, hot pepper, tamarind, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, salad leaves, cabbage, celery, broccoli, onions, garlic and ginger. Dark chocolate and vegetable oils (especially olive oil) are also advised.

-Black grapes and especially their seeds contain resveratrol which is known to be anti-carcinogenic.³ I ate the fruits and cracked and chewed the seeds.

-Red wine also contains resveratrol but, to avoid the alcohol I drank pasteurized grape juice.

-Tomatoes and guavas contain lycopene (another anti-carcinogen). Water-melon contains higher concentrations of it.^{4,5}

-Be careful about some of the advice. Beer is said to be good as it contains an anti-carcinogen, xanthohumol.⁶ Apparently the problem is that you need to drink 17 glasses a day to obtain the necessary quantity of the desired substance.

Bad Foods and Drinks

-It is best to avoid beef, pork, animal fats, processed meats, smoked foods, white wheat flour, drinks in plastic bottles, glucose, and

alcohol in excess.

-Keep clear of all dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt, ice-cream, butter) and egg yolks. Biscuits and cakes contain eggs and milk or butter.

Dairy Products

None of the medics I consulted accepted the suggestion that dairy products could be involved in developing cancer. This story is very interesting. In Western Europe the incidence of breast cancer is 4%, whereas in China it is 1 in 10,000.⁷ These facts have been known for two or three decades so an adequate explanation should have been found by now.⁸ After all, the difference is 400 fold and the samples (totalling more than half a billion people) must be large enough to satisfy any critic. In general the Chinese don't consume dairy products. Dr Judith Plant (op. cit.) drew attention to the situation in 1987. Since then some research has been done on the question but not nearly enough.

The present attitude to the involvement of dairy products reminds me of linking smoking to lung cancer some years ago. There is a lot of circumstantial evidence, but little hard data. In fact the effects of natural growth hormones are far better documented than were those of nicotine during the early decades of that debate.⁹

Vitamin C

A similar situation obtains over the role of vitamin C as a cancer control.¹⁰ Most in the medical profession do not accept it as a cancer treatment. It is enlightening to read some of the articles listed on the subject.¹¹

The Treatment

In January 2010, I started six weeks of Intensity-modulated radiation therapy in Brasília. In this treatment an image of the tumour is placed on a computer programme and the computer controls the direction of the radiation guns. That way the aim of the guns is more accurate than when done manually and the collateral damage is greatly reduced.¹² This is especially important

with prostate cancer as the prostate gland is squeezed between the bladder and the colon. Inaccuracy often has very unpleasant consequences.

During the first fortnight of treatment I felt nothing unusual and continued working normally. The second fortnight was rather tiring, but nothing untoward. The third fortnight was a nightmare. I was very weak and in considerable pain most of the time. Of course this was to be expected as the effect of the radiation is cumulative. For a couple of months after returning home I was still weak and I tired quickly and very easily.

My Present Health

The results of the radiation therapy were well worth the discomfort I suffered from the treatment. It was a great success and three months afterward my PSA was 0.25. Fortunately I have suffered no side effects and my life is more or less back to normal. Nowadays, I do my best to avoid stress and am careful with dairy products and processed foods. I have my PSA checked regularly. Since July 2010 it has been low; it is now 0.38.

Conclusions

Research the internet to be well informed.

-Find special items for your diet.

-Discuss your options, etc. with friends and relatives. They are sure to help; they'll be worried sick about you.

-When you consult your medic you need to know enough to ask the right questions and to understand the answers, and to know when you're being fobbed off.

-Identify the possible cause of your condition (smoking, stress, diet) and make the necessary changes to your life. Some people find it difficult to make the changes. If you love the people around you, you don't have any choice.

-It is very difficult, but try not to worry. Worrying results in stress and that will worsen the problem.

-Your determination to fight the problem is a vital factor. Think positively.

Final comment

Prostate cancer is an illness of older men. Therefore, on reaching 40 years of age it is important that you have your PSA checked regularly. If a cancer grows to the stage that you notice, it might well be too late.

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–Anthony Raw

Departamento de Ciências Biológicas,
Universidade Estadual de Santa Cruz,
Ilhéus, Bahia, Brazil,
Email: anthonyraw2@gmail.com

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