What You Need to Know About Your Partner’s Prostate Cancer.

Providing Support for Your Partner

Prostate cancer can be a physical and emotional challenge—not just for men but also for their significant others. As partners in the battle against prostate cancer you can be a strong team in this fight. Here are some recommendations to serve as a guide on this challenging journey.

Men

- Education is key—arm yourself with knowledge on your diagnosis and possible treatments.
- You are not alone—enlist your partner to help you fight the battle.
- Partners can be a valuable resource for collecting information and getting questions answered—bring your partner to your medical appointments.
- There is no shame in what you are feeling—do not hesitate to talk about what is happening to you.
- Trust your partner to be your support, but remember that he or she may still need to lean on you—listen to what he or she is going through and take into account any concerns and feelings about your diagnosis and treatment.

Wives/Partners

- Stand by your man...in the doctor’s office—attend medical appointments with your husband/partner, if possible, as you may be able to discern additional information and serve as his champion in the treatment process.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions—diagnosis can be scary and treatment options confusing. Help your loved one to investigate his condition and the treatment options available to him.
- Lend your voice—help your partner to communicate with his parents, friends, and children about the disease.
- Your support is vital—support your loved one in the treatment decisions he makes to ensure his health.
- Prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment affects you both—do not dismiss the emotional impact your partner’s prostate cancer may have on you.

Together

- Keep the lines of communication open as you share your feelings about the illness.
- Talk with your doctor(s) about concerns you both may have.
- Accept that you may each find a new meaning in life as you deal with this disease.

During his lifetime, a man has a 1 in 6 chance of being diagnosed with prostate cancer. Therefore, it is important for men and their partners to educate each other about this disease, as well as the various available screening and treatment options.

What is the Prostate?
The prostate is one of the male sex glands. About the size of a walnut, the prostate sits below the urinary bladder, and surrounds the upper part of the urethra.

What is Prostate Cancer?
Prostate cancer is generally a slow-growing, malignant tumor, which often begins in the outer part of the prostate. It is also the most common non-skin cancer diagnosed in American men. While the exact cause of prostate cancer is unknown, it is known that male hormones, such as testosterone, work to stimulate the cancer growth. Because there may not be any obvious symptoms associated with early-stage prostate cancer, prostate cancer may not be detected until it has spread beyond the prostate.
Prostate Cancer Screening
Because prostate cancer frequently does not produce signs and symptoms, you or your partner may first learn of a problem during a routine screening test. Screening tests include:

- **Digital rectal exam (DRE):** A physical exam of the prostate, where a finger is used to feel for lumps or abnormal tissue areas.
- **Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test:** A test that measures the blood levels of PSA, a substance made by the prostate and found in higher amounts in men with prostate cancer.
- **Transrectal ultrasound:** A probe is inserted into the rectum to check the prostate, using ultrasound waves to form a picture of the body tissues called a sonogram.

Different Prostate Cancer Stages
Once prostate cancer has been detected, there are three ways it can be classified: early-stage, advanced, or hormone resistant (also called androgen-independent).

- **Early-stage prostate cancer** is when the cancer is still confined to the prostate, but has been detected either by a digital rectal exam or through a biopsy performed as a result of high PSA blood levels.
- **Advanced prostate cancer** occurs when the cancer has spread beyond the prostate. At this stage, it is not uncommon to completely remove the prostate or use radiation or cryosurgery to destroy the cancerous tissue. Hormone therapy is also used to slow the rate of cancer cell growth.
- **Hormone-Resistant prostate cancer**—also called androgen-independent prostate cancer—indicates the cancer is no longer responding to hormone therapy. While there is currently no cure for hormone-resistant prostate cancer, several therapies can extend life and help reduce pain and discomfort.
Some therapies that are available for prostate cancer include:

- **HORMONE THERAPY:** The goal of hormone therapy (also called androgen deprivation therapy or androgen suppression therapy) is to lower levels of the male hormones—such as testosterone—in the body. Lowering these hormone levels can usually make prostate cancer shrink or grow more slowly. Hormone therapy for prostate cancer is most effective during the first two years of treatment. Two types of hormone therapy for treating prostate cancer are hormonal drug therapy or surgical removal of the testicles (orchiectomy), the main source of male hormone production. Ask your physician which treatment option may be appropriate for you.

- **CHEMOTHERAPY:** Chemotherapy is generally reserved for patients with advanced stage prostate cancer that no longer responds to hormonal therapy. Chemotherapy is the use of drugs that target and destroy rapidly dividing cells, including cancer cells. The drugs used for chemotherapy come in many different forms, with some injected and some in pill form. Depending on the type of chemotherapy, these may be administered at home or in a clinic or hospital.

- **RADIATION:** Radiation therapy uses penetrating beams of high-energy waves or streams of particles to kill and hinder the growth of cancer cells. In prostate cancer, radiation therapy involves either external beam radiation or a type of internal radiation where tiny radioactive seeds are inserted directly into the prostate (brachytherapy).

- **WATCHFUL WAITING:** This approach involves carefully observing the prostate cancer without providing immediate treatment. This may be appropriate for men with less aggressive tumors, who are over 70, or who are worried about the possible effects of more aggressive prostate cancer treatments.

- **SURGERY:** Surgery permits the removal of the entire prostate, with the nearby lymph nodes occasionally removed as a precaution. While this approach may be indicated if the tumor is small and has not spread, surgery is not common when the cancer has spread to the lymph nodes or other sites outside of the prostate.
Questions to Ask Your Physician
Learning about the diagnosis and treatment options available for you or your partner may help you both make informed decisions about his care. The first step in the learning process begins with talking to a physician. Because every man’s prostate cancer diagnosis is different, what a physician recommends for one man may not be right for another. Developing a list of questions to ask is a good first start to addressing concerns and getting information.

Here is a list of basic questions about prostate cancer to get the conversation started:

About Prostate Cancer
- What stage is my prostate cancer? What does this mean?
- What are my chances of responding to treatment?

Treatment Options
- What are the treatment options for my stage of prostate cancer? Why or why not would these treatments help me?
  - Biologic Therapy
  - Chemotherapy
  - Cryosurgery
  - Hormonal Therapy
  - Radiation
  - Surgery
  - Watchful Waiting
- What treatment options, oral or injectable, are available for me as a prostate cancer patient?
- What treatment do you feel will work best for me? Why are you recommending this treatment?

• What are the possible side effects of this treatment? Will it make me feel sick? Will I develop incontinence? Will it cause impotence (Erectile Dysfunction)?
• What types of hormonal therapies are available to me? Will these be beneficial?
• What are the latest advances in hormonal therapies? Is there any treatment I could be prescribed that does not have to be taken daily?
• Should I consider clinical trials for the treatment of my prostate cancer? Where can I find information about prostate cancer clinical trials?
• What kinds of food will help me? If so, where can I get advice on meal planning?
• Will this treatment allow me to continue to be involved in my normal daily activities? If not, would another treatment be better for me so that I can remain active?
• Will the treatment affect my family? What do they need to know? What education or support resources are available for them?
• Will the treatment affect my appearance? If so, are there other options that will not change the way that I look?
• What if my current therapy does not continue to benefit me? Are there any other options?
• How often should I see my healthcare professional?

Other Questions
• Where can I get further information on prostate cancer?
• Where can I find additional support?
• Are there support groups/services specifically for the partners of prostate cancer patients?

Notes
Learn more:

Us TOO

PROSTATE CANCER
EDUCATION & SUPPORT

www.ustoo.org

- A grassroots organization started in 1990 by prostate cancer survivors to serve prostate cancer survivors, their spouses/partners and families, the mission of Us TOO is to communicate timely, personalized and reliable information enabling informed choices regarding detection and treatment of prostate cancer. Ultimately, Us TOO strives to enhance the quality of life for all those affected by prostate cancer. For more information, please call the Us TOO helpline: 1-800-808-7866.

Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization™

www.y-me.org

- A national nonprofit organization whose mission is to ensure, through information, empowerment and peer support, that no one faces breast cancer alone. Founded in 1978 by two breast cancer patients to provide support for fellow patients and their loved ones, Y-ME has since become the premier resource for free breast cancer information and services. For more information, or to talk with a breast cancer survivor, please call the Y-ME National Breast Cancer Hotline: 1-800-221-2141.

For more information or resources, please also visit the following organizations:

American Cancer Society
- www.cancer.org

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- www.cdc.gov

PROSTATEinfo.com
- www.prostateinfo.com