



Below the Belt!

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Newsletter of The Nepean / Blue Mountains Prostate Cancer Support Group Inc.
(ABN No. 35 871 442 176)

The never ending saga of whether or not to conduct regular PSA screening has recently made the headlines.

"The recent recommendation by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), a government panel, against routine PSA-based screening for prostate cancer is sparking a great deal of debate in medical circles--and likely causing confusion for patients.

The USPSTF report, published October 7 in the Annals of Internal Medicine, concluded that screening men using the PSA test does not prolong life for the average American man, and "is associated with harms related to subsequent evaluation and treatments, some of which may be unnecessary."

In light of the controversy, Dr Anthony Lowe, CEO of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, issued the following statement

"Good afternoon all

*As many of you would already know, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force**

(Continued Page 3)



**The December Group Meeting
Monday, December 19th
is
Christmas Party Time!**

Venue:-

Building SWAHS2, at the rear of car
park No.3

(Our usual meeting venue for a 6-30 to
7-00 start)

Food, Drinks and Music Provided.

(If you have a special treat that you
would like to share, please bring it along.



Food for Thought

What are the Health Benefits of Beer?

It will come as good news to beer drinkers that the world's oldest drink holds health benefits of its own. Some of those benefits, researchers say, suggest that beer is deserving of mention when it comes to the health benefits.

Beer and Bone Health Benefits: Is there a Link?

Research published in the February 2010 Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture examined 100 commercially produced beers, and found that those made from malted hops and barley (versus wheat), are a source of silicon, a mineral that helps increase bone mineral density. But don't cut out your milk for beer just yet - this study simply examined silicon content in beer, not its impact on bones, so it's not time to make dietary recommendations. However, the research does help construct a case for the cold brew being a significant contributor to dietary silicon, and adds credibility to previous studies that suggest a connection between beer consumption and bone health benefits.

Cardiovascular Benefits and Beer

Though it's true that alcohol consumption in general can benefit cardiovascular health, you may wonder if beer, specifically, can help keep your ticker ticking. Good news, beer drinkers! A large 2003 survey found that men who drank beer had a lower risk of coronary artery disease than men who drank other types of alcohol. Plus, research culled from the Nurses' Health Study found that women who drank one beer per day struggled less with hypertension than those in the study who consumed wine or other liquor.

Antioxidants in Beer

Fruits, vegetables, and, of course, red wine come to mind when thinking of antioxidants, but beer also belongs in the antioxidant group! Canadian research from 2004 suggests that beer is a strong source of antioxidants, providing just as much protective effect from polyphenols as red wine. But not all research on the health benefits of antioxidants show beer to be beneficial, especially when applied to everyday limitations. Take, for example, xanthohumol, an antioxidant found in beer: It's been shown to slow prostate cancer growth, but in order to gain the protective effects, one would have to consume about 17 beers per day! Obviously, drinking beer to ward off cancer isn't recommended, since drinking that much would cause more harm than good for your body.

Bring on the Beer?

Before you crack open a cold one, keep in mind that, as is the case with any alcoholic beverage, if you don't currently drink, there's no reason you should begin drinking just to glean health benefits. Plus, going beyond one drink per day for women, and two for men has been shown to have an adverse effect on health. Think of beer (or red wine) as a small part of an already-healthy diet that is balanced and includes whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean protein, and fruits and vegetables. And before you belly up to the bar, don't forget to add up the calories from the beer (or any drink) you imbibe if you choose to partake. Beer can add a lot of extra calories to your day (and dark beer can sometimes have twice the calories of lighter brews) – so that's an important angle to add in when it comes to weight control. No one wants the dreaded beer belly!

The Bottom Line

Beer drinkers can raise a toast to unsung health benefits, but just as with red wine, it's important to avoid drinking solely for health. Choosing nutritious antioxidant and vitamin-packed foods to achieve dietary goals is the best strategy for great health.

(This item was gleaned from 'www.healthcastle.com' a web site run by Registered Dieticians whose aim is to encourage people to better manage their health through healthy eating.)

PSA Testing Controversy (Continued From Page 1)

recently released a draft recommendation statement that advises against PSA based testing for prostate cancer. The recommendation applies to men in the U.S. population that do not have symptoms that are highly suspicious for prostate cancer, regardless of age, race, or family history.

Note, the Task Force did not evaluate the use of the PSA test as part of a diagnostic strategy in men with symptoms that are highly suspicious for prostate cancer. The recommendation also does not consider the use of the PSA test for surveillance after diagnosis and/or treatment of prostate cancer.

It goes without saying that PCFA's policy on testing remains unchanged. PCFA has been very actively involved in the media debate around the announcement. David Sandoe and I did an interview for Channel 9, and I have done interviews for Channel 7, 702 ABC Sydney and SMH. For further details, please take a look at the "news" item on PCFA's website.(www.prostate.org.au)

We are also working actively to bring about a national round table on PSA testing, involving the medical colleges, Cancer Councils and other stakeholders.(Refer following article)

I will keep everyone informed of developments as they occur.

*Best wishes
Anthony Lowe"*

* USPSTF is an American independent panel that conducts scientific evidence reviews of a broad range of clinical preventive health care services (such as screening, counseling, and preventive medications) and develops recommendations for primary care clinicians and health systems. These recommendations are published in the form of Recommendation Statements.

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Cancer Expert calls for National Prostate Testing

Brisbane, 26th September

In an address to the Public Health Association of Australia's annual conference, respected cancer epidemiologist, Professor Bruce Armstrong has called for an expert body to be established to make decisions on how a national program of prostate cancer screening should be regulated.

"We need to have a committee established to oversee the compilation and review of the evidence around screening to develop a program that maximises the benefits and minimises the harms, he said."

Approximately 20 percent of the male population aged between 45 to 74 are already being tested in any twelve month period.

"It's entirely reasonable to say there is screening going on out there at a level that is equivalent to having a national program but it's not done under any policy or guidelines or anything else, it's just happening."

The screening involves a blood test that looks for elevated levels of a protein called prostate specific antigen (PSA screening). Patients with raised levels may be referred for an ultrasound-guided needle biopsy of the prostate to check for signs of cancer.

If cancer is diagnosed, the treatment may cause sexual dysfunction and urinary incontinence.

At present, screening cannot differentiate between tumours that are low-risk and potentially fatal aggressive tumours. (*American Urologist, Dr. Scruffy Myers does not exactly agree with this claim, Refer to his web blogs at 'www,askdmyers.wordpress.com'*)

Professor Armstrong acknowledged the potential harms but said the evidence was clear that PSA screening saved lives.

www

MEDIA RELEASE

Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia supports calls for national protocols on prostate cancer testing

Sydney, Wednesday 28th September 2011: Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA) has commended Professor Bruce Armstrong on his recommendations for establishing national protocols for prostate cancer testing to help regulate the guidance given to men about the prostate cancer testing and treatment.

Professor Armstrong, a respected epidemiologist from the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney, addressed delegates at the Public Health Association of Australia annual conference on 26th September expressing the need for a dedicated committee to "oversee the compilation and review of the evidence around [prostate cancer] screening to develop a program that maximises the benefits and minimises the harms".

Although some medical bodies continue to debate the benefits of prostate cancer screening and the validity of the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test, according to PCFA the focus now should be on streamlining the messages related to testing.

Dr Anthony Lowe, Chief Executive of PCFA, says "As Professor Armstrong points out, a de facto, unorganised, prostate cancer screening program already exists in Australia, with 20 per cent of the male population aged 45 to 74 being tested in any given year."

"There is growing evidence, especially from the European studies, that that PSA testing does reduce deaths from prostate cancer. Collectively, we are failing men by giving mixed messages about who should be tested and at what age, and by not providing sufficient decision support for men who have an abnormal test result."

"PCFA applauds Professor Armstrong's comments and strongly supports steps towards developing a consistent national program or set of guidelines that give Australian men the clear advice and guidance they need."

Professor Armstrong's comments are in line with PCFA's plans to collaborate with like-minded organisations like the Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand (USANZ) and other medical colleges to formalise a program that offers men clear guidance on prostate cancer testing and treatment options.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, each year around 20,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer, and close to 3,300 men die as a direct result of the disease.

For further information about prostate cancer, contact the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia on free-call 1800 22 00 99, or visit www.prostate.org.au

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand also issued a Media Statement basically endorsing the comments made by the PCFA.

Understanding and then overcoming erectile issues

Penis rehabilitation exercises can result in real rewards, as Sunraysia (Victoria) Support Group member Peter Guild relates in this article.

“Masculinity always seemed a vague notion of male potency, fatherhood and strength to me, an abstract idea of a small part of my character. Loss of erectile function following a radical prostatectomy crystallised all my thoughts on the subject.

Despite being fully briefed on the consequences of surgery, the reality of a shrivelled up penis, too short even to stand up at a urinal with, came as a blow to my ego.

Overcoming cancer had been the priority, but restoring my manhood now seemed just as important.

Thanks to nerve sparing surgery and terrific post-operative support from my urologist, I knew that a range of options were available.

My personal prescription for penile rehabilitation was suggested soon after surgery, but initially I failed to realise that it was a long term exercise program rather than a quick fix.

The alternative ‘quick fix’ option – penile injections delivered immediate results (along with four hours of agony, even at low doses) but afterwards my penis shrivelled up to nothing again.

My current exercise program requires daily use of a vacuum erection pump to restore blood flow to the penis. I use a manual Soma Therapy pump and constriction rings each time I shower. This is a \$600+ medical grade vacuum pump, not a sex toy.

A daily Viagra, Cialis or Levitra tablet or part tablet, helps to maximise the effectiveness of the pump.

Lasting results have taken months of exercise to achieve. My improvement, from little response initially to complete restoration of size now has been worth the time and expense.

I took on this as an exercise program to be carried out each day, like jogging or walking. I may never have a spontaneous erection again but I’m happy that my old friend is back.

The same procedure with the pump and constriction rings is used to achieve an erection prior to intercourse, when the opportunity presents.

Vacuum erection devices are not suitable for men who use blood thinners or have a history of bleeding disorders.

PDE 5 Inhibitors (Cialis, Viagra, Levitra) are not suitable for men who are taking medicines containing nitrates for angina, or men who are not fit enough to engage in sex due to cardiovascular disease.

Be sure to consult your GP and Specialist prior to using a vacuum erection device or PDE Inhibitors.”

(This item was published in ‘The Prostate Supporter’ The newsletter of the Prostate Cancer Support Groups of Victoria and Tasmania. Volume 2, Number 3, Spring 2011. We thank them for allowing us to reproduce this article.)

Boating Matters

In recent months, members of our group have been involved in three “aquatic” ventures. These included Dragon Boating at Shoalhaven and Darling Harbour at the “Dragons Abreast Regatta” and also the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic.

Shoalhaven Dragon Boating



Once again this year we were invited to join “The Blue Blokes” at the Shoalhaven Community Dragon Boat Regatta. The ‘Blue Blokes’ are a Dragon Boat crew made up of Prostate Cancer survivors from the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Goulburn and Nepean / Blue Mountains Prostate Cancer Support Groups.

The man behind the formation of this group is Gordon Grivas, from the Nowra ‘Water Dragons’, the organisers and hosts of the Shoalhaven Dragon Boating Regatta. Gordon’s aim is to raise the profile of Prostate Cancer survivors and to emulate the efforts of the fantastic ‘Dragons Abreast’ movement for women Breast Cancer survivors.

2011 was the second year of our participation. We had a very successful day finishing first and second in our two heats but being unplaced in our final.

Highlight of the day was the ‘Challenge’, a race between the ‘Blue Blokes’ and the ‘Pink Ladies’ from Dragons Abreast.

The Ladies were all class, style and perfect timing. The ‘Blokes’ adopted the approach of ‘Bash, Splash and Bluster’, but we prevailed! Just!! The ladies came home strongly and very nearly pipped us. (Who knows, if we could ever learn to paddle properly (and in time!) we might become good.



The Hawkesbury Canoe Classic

Our Support Group once again helped out at this year’s Hawkesbury Canoe Classic.

This was our tenth year of taking part in this event. This is one of our major fund raising events that we participate in. At this stage we do not know the amount of money that was raised. We will let you know in a later newsletter.

Jill (wife of Board member Brett Sowerby) and her paddling partner, Judy, did very well in the classic. They set a new standard for their boat class/age, At the same time they set the fastest time ever for a Women’s Long Rec 2 boat class regardless of paddler age. Congratulations Jill and Judy.

Dragon Boating – Darling Harbour



The 'Prostate Dragons' once again took part in the 'Dragons Abreast' regatta at Darling Harbour. This is the fourth year that we have participated in this fabulous social event. The first year the boat was made up of half breast cancer survivors and half prostate cancer survivors. The past two years we fielded a full boat made up of survivors and their partners and children. This year we had two boats! One boat was fully sponsored by the PCFA and the second was sponsored by the support group assisted by some very generous donors. *(This event is a major fund raising event for the Dragons Abreast group and*

each boat costs \$2000.00 min to enter)

All was not plain sailing (sorry, should that read 'plain paddling') for our two organisers Brett Sowerby and Gary Clear. Apart from having to organise sponsorship and paddlers from various locations (Sydney, Illawarra as well as Penrith) there were a number of late withdrawals. One of which was Dr. Anthony Lowe, (CEO of PCFA), Anthony found himself stranded in Melbourne when Qantas pulled their little trick! Our numbers were made up from ladies from Sydney Dragons Abreast.

Three of our paddlers came from the Urological profession based in Penrith, Urologists Celi Varol and Richard Ferguson and their practice nurse Liz Marshall all took part.

Both of our teams were very successful. One team had 3 second places in their 3 heats, while the other team was more

successful, 2 wins and 1 second place. We all thought that these results would have qualified us for the final. However, one of the requirements of competing in the 'Social' division is that there can be no more than 10 men in the crew. We clearly did not conform to this rule. A bit of a bummer, as I for one was looking forward to another paddle! Still, we were able to promote the message about Prostate Cancer and show that there is plenty to do in life after a diagnosis of the disease.



A highlight of the day was a social race against crews of breast cancer survivors. At the end of this race we were privileged to be able to take part in the "Flowers on the Water" ceremony. This ceremony takes place each year and is held to remember all those that have been lost to the disease. Boats are linked and rose petals are cast on to the water. To witness this ceremony is quite emotional, to take part even more so.

This is a fabulous day! Not only for those participating but also for those spectating.

Why not join us next year!

Report of 2011 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Support Group was held on October 17th. President Alan Moran outlined the achievements of the group over the past year and thanked all Board Members for their efforts.

All Board positions were declared open.

Frank Petersen was unable to continue in the role of Group Treasurer but all other board members stood for re-election.

Allan Burrow stepped forward and has taken on the Treasurer's role.

In accepting Frank's decision not to stand, President Alan Moran, paid tribute to the excellent job that Frank has done over the past couple of years.

(For a full list of Board Members refer to page 10.)

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The PSA blood test

The PSA is a useful indicator of possible cancer, but can be variable as found by the different results if a PSA blood test is taken over several days (up to 20% difference) or analytically, between assay (test) runs (up to 5% difference).

Some causes of an elevated PSA are:

- Prostate cancer;
- Benign prostatic hyperplasia or BPH, an enlarged prostate;
- The patient having undergone a prostatic massage;
- Inflammation of the prostate.

PSA is not affected by routine digital rectal examination (DRE).

PSA can also be useful when looking at tissue under the microscope.

Its presence can indicate to the pathologist as to where a disease has arisen: for example, if it is a bladder cancer or a prostate cancer. In the case of metastatic disease (as the PSA shows in blood as well as tissue), the pathologist can ascertain that the cancer has come from the prostate or elsewhere. PSA testing can differentiate the type of cancer.

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Legal tales

ATTORNEY: *ALL your responses MUST be oral , OK?*

What school did you go to?

WITNESS: *Oral...*

What's to Come

Group Meeting – Monday December 19th

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Group Meeting – Monday January 16th

No Speaker

Open Forum

Group Meeting – Monday February 20th

No Speaker at This Stage

Will be published in local papers prior to meeting

All meetings :- Gather at 6-30pm for a 7-00pm start.

A Laugh at Life !

Blonde from Dublin

A very attractive blonde from Dublin arrived at the casino and bet twenty-thousand dollars on a single roll of the dice.

She said, 'I hope you don't mind, but I feel much luckier when I'm completely nude'.

With that, she stripped from the neck down, rolled the dice and yelled, 'Come on, baby, Mama needs new clothes!'

As the dice came to a stop, she jumped up and down and squealed...

'YES, YES, I WON, I WON!'

She hugged each of the dealers and then picked up her winnings and her clothes and quickly departed. The dealers stared at each other dumbfounded.

Finally, one of them asked, 'What did she roll?'

The other answered, 'I don't know - I thought you were watching.'

MORAL OF THE STORY ~

Not all Irish are stupid.

Not all blondes are dumb.

But all men are men.

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## Very Short Story

Man driving down road.  
Woman driving up same road.  
They pass each other.  
Woman yells out window, PIG!  
Man yells out window, BITCH!  
Man rounds next curve.  
Man crashes into a HUGE PIG in middle of road and dies.

Thought For the Day:

*"If men would just listen."*

## Seniors on Computers

As we 'Silver Surfers' know, sometimes we have trouble with our computers.

I had a problem yesterday, so I called Eric, the 11 year old next door, whose bedroom looks like Mission Control and asked him to come over.

Eric clicked a couple of buttons and solved the problem.

As he was walking away, I called after him, 'So, what was wrong?'

He replied, 'It was an ID ten T error.'

I didn't want to appear stupid, but nonetheless enquired,

'An, ID ten T error ? What's that? In case I need to fix it again.'

Eric grinned .... 'Haven't you ever heard of an ID ten T error before?'

'No,' I replied.

'Write it down,' he said, 'and I think you'll figure it out.'?

So I wrote down:

## **ID10T**

I used to like Eric, the little bastard.

~~~~~

Why We Split Up

...She told me we couldn't afford beer anymore and I'd have to quit.

...Then I caught her spending \$65.00 on make-up.

...And I asked how come I had to give up stuff and not her.

...She said she needed the make-up to look pretty for me.

...I told her that was what the beer was for.

.. I don't think she's coming back.....

