



Don N.

I really had no knowledge of my prostate as long as everything was working normally. However, in my early forties I had an incidence of urinary blockage after taking an “over the counter” cold medication. This was checked out by the medical experts who assured me that my prostate was large for my age but felt normal. This however was an indication that I should, at my wife’s prompting get yearly medical exams including the dreaded “digital rectal exam”! The verdict each time was “large but feels normal”.

PSA (prostate specific antigen) was added to my tests when it became available as a prostate cancer test and it too said “normal for a man with a large prostate”. All the while though I was noticing a decreased urine flow and more frequent bathroom visits both day and night, and was contemplating asking for a TURP (Transurethral resection of the prostate (crudely called a roto-rooter)). However, my next PSA report showed a doubling over the year, a biopsy showed a small amount of cancer cells, and I joined the one-in-six Alberta men who will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime.

At that time (1997) the two choices of treatment were radical prostatectomy (surgery) or external beam radiation. My urologist assured me that the two treatments had about the same ten year survival rates but as he put it, “I recommend surgery, but I am a surgeon”.

He sent me home to think, research, and decide, but the very physical solution of surgery appealed more to both my wife and me. In a sense, the decision was more psychological than scientific.

Since my prostate was large, the urologist put me on three months of the “hormone treatment” to shrink the prostate prior to surgery. I think I had every possible side effect, including the hot flashes of menopause! The only sympathy that I got from my wife was, “So now you know how it feels”.

I was pleasantly surprised with the lack of pain following surgery and during the approximately six weeks of physical recovery. I tried to keep my sense of humor to deal with the three months of incontinence when my bladder seemed to have a mind of its own.

Since surgery, my slow urinary flow complaint has been eliminated and I tell those in the know that everything works but one. That one (sexual) has been hard to deal with but a loving wife, psychology counseling and medical intervention have been helpful.

PSA tests are still part of my life and readings are “undetectable” leading my urologist to tell me that I will eventually die of something other than prostate cancer! So I must eat my veggies, watch my fat intake, do my exercises and hope to emulate my mother who has beaten bowel cancer and is still going strong at age 95!