

The Tyranny of Statistics

BY RALPH BLUM

Ralph H Blum is a prostate cancer survivor who is the co-author of a book "The Invasion of the Prostate Snatchers" and a blog of the same name. His co-author, Dr Mark Scholz, is an eminent American medical oncologist. Ralph has kindly given us permission to publish this article from their blog.

When you are first diagnosed with prostate cancer and you do your research into the various treatment options available, you are likely to come across a mountain of data, numerical tables, and graphs detailing your life expectancy. Do not let this statistical overload scare or dismay you! Remember: There is a biology of the individual as well as a biology of the disease. What is missing from statistics? A good many of the variables and intangibles that make you an individual.

In a magazine article on the subject of statistics, evolutionary theorist Stephen Jay Gould, who had been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, quoted the Mark Twain quip about the three varieties of dishonesty, each worse than the one before: "Lies, damned lies and statistics." The truth is that statistics measure populations, and they can be interpreted in a great many ways. What they do not determine are the distinctive features of any individual case—including yours. But if you allow them to frighten and depress you, statistics can become the stuff of self-fulfilling prophecy.

"I'm not a statistic, I'm a person!"

At the time of his prostate cancer diagnosis, one man I knew was told there was a 23% chance the cancer was contained in the gland, a 57% chance it had penetrated the prostate wall, a 10% chance of seminal vesicle involvement and a 9% chance that the cancer had spread to the lymph nodes. "Well," he said, "try sorting out that lot! And besides, I'm not a statistic, I'm a person!" That's the healthy response to statistics.

Among the many things I learned in the support groups I have attended, is that every man's prostate cancer is different, as is his general health, his diet, his lifestyle and—at least as important—his mindset and his attitude. There is a growing acceptance of the idea that what you believe, what you think and what you feel, can make all the difference on your prostate cancer journey. A belief in your chosen treatment, a positive attitude, **contd next page**

Our Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday 8 April 2015.

Time: 10:00 am to 12.30 pm

Place: Ivanhoe Uniting Church, Seddon Street, Ivanhoe (Melways 31 F8)

- Meetings are open to anyone interested in getting support or information on a prostate cancer journey.
- Partners or carers are welcome to all meetings
- **There is no charge for attending.**

Night-time Meetings

If you are unable to attend support meetings during the day, the Diamond Valley Prostate Cancer Support Group meets at night. For more info, phone Peter Gebert 0418 576 682 or online at <http://www.dvpcsg.org.au>



The Tyranny of Statistics contd

an irreverent sense of humour, an independent and contrary spirit, large doses of hope and a strong will to live can all work together to overcome even the most dismal prognosis.

Cellular biologist Bruce Lipton, author of “The Biology of Belief”, claims that it is the “micro-environment”—things like your emotional state, your level of anxiety, the effect of stress hormones and all those other

intangible factors that make you an individual—that either strengthens or suppresses your immune system. This is not a new idea. It was Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine, who declared that he would rather know what sort of person has a disease than what sort of disease a person has.

Statistics have their place. Be mindful of that, and keep them there. In the long run, it’s a matter of perspective. You’re not a statistic. You’re a person.

A simple gift

by Manny Vasquez, Prostate Cancer Survivor.

I received a gift this morning - a simple but unique gift. I was given a new day, fresh and unused. There was never one like it before and there would never be another one just like it.

I could use as I see fit, make it my own if I wish, or share it with others. It could be ignored, which would waste an irreplaceable resource. Simply to maintain the status quo is stagnation.

This priceless gift should be used creatively; the day’s end should show value added.

Let me use it wisely, kindly, cheerfully, mercifully and lovingly. To do otherwise is the loss of an opportunity that cannot be recaptured.

Each day is my personal beginning, to accomplish the very best that is in me.

Smokers have worse outcomes

Doctors at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre studied 2358 patients who received external beam radiotherapy (EBRT) for clinically localised prostate cancer between 1988 and 2005.

Based on their case histories, patients were classified as 'never smokers', 'current smokers', 'former smokers', and 'current smoking unknown'.

The study found that patients who were current smokers had a 40% relative increase of

cancer relapse and were twice as susceptible to disease spread and death due to prostate cancer, compared with their non-smoking counterparts.

Current smokers had also a higher chance of side effects such as urinary retention, urinary incontinence, and bladder haemorrhage, compared with those who had no history of smoking.

Reference:
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25345838>

Not So Wonderful Pomegranate Juice

The US Court of Appeal has ruled that the health claims made by POM Wonderful about its pomegranate juice were not supported by scientific evidence: see <http://tinyurl.com/nnp9hun>

DISCLAIMER: Information in this newsletter is not intended to take the place of medical advice. You should obtain advice from your doctor relevant to your specific situation before acting or relying on anything in this newsletter. We have no liability whatsoever to you in connection with this newsletter.

BOOK REVIEW

The Supplement Handbook -A Trusted Expert's Guide to What Works and What's Worthless for more than 100 conditions.
by Dr Mark Moyad Ebook US\$11.81

Dr Mark Moyad is well known for his regular articles about supplements in [the Insights newsletter](#) from the Prostate Cancer Research Institute.

The story of how he came to specialise in researching supplements is an interesting one.

As a young doctor Dr Moyad was advising a cancer patient, Mr Jenkins, about diet and supplements. Mr Jenkins asked him why no doctors were working fulltime in this area. Dr Moyad replied that the subject wasn't taught in medical schools and financially it was a dead end. He joked with Mr Jenkins that if Mr Jenkins contributed \$1.5 million to an endowment, Dr Moyad could devote his life to studying dietary supplements. Much to his surprise, a few days later Dr Moyad received a cheque for \$1.5 million.

As they say, the rest is history. Dr. Moyad is now the Jenkins/Pokempner Director of Preventive & Complementary Medicine at the University of Michigan Medical Centre. In his most recent book he sets out more than 30 years' experience of studying supplements.

Dr Moyad says that, despite his passion for supplements, he's not a pill-pusher; rather he's a healthy life-style advocate. He describes his approach to supplements, diet and life-style as "Be educated but not extreme." He wants readers to use his book as a basis for a discussion with the doctors about their options.

Dr Moyad says that what is good for heart health is also good for prostate health.

He suggests 7 Habits to Improve Heart Health (and overall health):

1. Exercise Regularly.
2. Eat a Moderately Healthy Diet.
3. Eliminate all Tobacco Exposure.
4. Maintain a normal Blood Pressure.
5. Maintain a normal Blood Sugar Level.
6. Maintain healthy Cholesterol Levels.
7. Maintain a healthy weight or waist size.

Dr Moyad uses the acronym SAM to describe drugs and potential supplement equivalents that are beginning to garner enough research to suggest that they *could* help prevent prostate cancer.

SAM stands for Statins, Aspirin and Metformin, all of which are primarily generic drugs derived from natural sources. Statins come from a fungus (red rice yeast), aspirin from willow bark and metformin from the French lilac.

Dr Moyad suggests that people who need any of these 3 drugs for their cardiovascular disease or diabetes risk may also get a benefit in terms of prostate cancer risk or progression.

To combat low energy levels, Dr Moyad suggests, amongst other things, taking 20-25 grams per day of whey isolate powder (powder that only contains protein, no fat or sugar, or only very small amounts of fat or sugar - He recommends the Jay Robb brand). This is because we require adequate amounts of high quality protein to rebuild and repair body tissues, including muscles, which contributes to good energy.

As the title indicates, the book is not limited to prostate cancer. One of my children is now successfully following Dr Moyad's recommendations for migraine treatment.

Lots of commonsense and good advice. I highly recommend the book.

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Prostate Heidelberg provides information, education and support for those affected by prostate cancer. At the meetings, we

1. *Show respect to members and speakers;*
2. *Allow people to speak and we listen;*
3. *Respect confidentiality;*
4. *Allow new ideas to be shared.*

We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (February to December) from 10:00am -12:30pm.

We meet at the Uniting Church Meeting Room, Seddon St, Ivanhoe (behind the Commonwealth Bank in Upper Heidelberg Rd).

Free parking is available in a large public parking area at rear of the church. Ivanhoe railway station is nearby.

Meetings are open to anyone interested in getting support or information on a prostate cancer journey.

Partners or carers are welcome to all meetings

There is no charge for attending.

COMMITTEE:

Max Shub, Facilitator 0413 777 342
Paul Hobson Secretary 0405 086 869
Chris Ellis
Spiros Haldas
Patrick Woodlock

Annual subscription - \$5 from 1st January per individual, couple, or family.

MEETING VENUE:

Uniting Church Meeting Room
Seddon St, Ivanhoe
(behind the Commonwealth Bank in Upper Heidelberg Rd).

CORRESPONDENCE

Prostate Heidelberg, PO Box 241 Ivanhoe Vic 3079

ProstateHeidelberg@gmail.com
www.ProstateHeidelberg.info

CALENDAR Meetings: 10:00am -12:30pm

- Wed 8 April '15
- Wed 13 May '15
- Wed 10 June '15
- Wed 8 July '15
- Wed 12 August '15
- Wed 9 September '15
- Wed 14 October '15
- Wed 11 November '15
- Wed 9 December '15 (Christmas lunch)

Please contact Paul Hobson to redirect or cancel receipt of this Newsletter.

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