

# PROSTATE CANCER ACTION GROUP (S.A.) INC.

Affiliated with  
Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia



ABN 26 499 349 142

## NEWSLETTER

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Group. This Group does not offer medical or other professional advice. Articles printed in this newsletter are presented only as a means of sharing information and opinions with members, with the object of promoting stimulation for independent thought and analysis, and sharing the experiences of others. It is not intended to recommend any particular treatment or product in this publication. Each person should assess the relevance to him/her self, and any person acting on information in this newsletter takes the responsibility for any such action. It is important that any person should consult with his/her health professional before making any decision about treatments, and all articles should be read in this context.

WEBSITE – [www.pcagsa.org.au](http://www.pcagsa.org.au)

### MAY 2004

#### **SUCCESSFUL AWARENESS MEETING AT BERRI**

Last week's Awareness Meeting at Berri produced yet another success in our series of such meetings around South Australia. A crowd of about 80 people attended, and the whole programme was well-received by all who attended. Assessment of the evaluation forms is not yet to hand. On a first perusal of the completed forms, this meeting did not appear to draw as much comment as we have experienced previously.

We are very appreciative of the Berri Club's management in allowing us the free use of their function room. Also, we express our thanks to the local ladies who provided a traditional country style supper – plenty of food for everybody. These two contributions considerably reduced our expenses for the night. In addition to that, Riverland Regional Health Service Inc. also came to the party with some advertising costs, and assisted with distribution of flyers. In all, it really showed that the Riverland region is very community-minded, and it was also evident that they are concerned with the level of all types of cancer being diagnosed in the area.

Dr. James Aspinall was the key-note speaker for the evening. Dr. Aspinall, who was not known to any of us prior to the meeting, is an Adelaide Hills born and bred man. He attended the Heathfield primary and high schools, and studied at Flinders University in the early 1980s, followed by junior medical work at all of the major hospitals in Adelaide. He did 3 years of full-time research on prostate cancer at Flinders Medical Centre, as a study towards his PhD. From this research, he has had 5 publications, and was in one of the first groups to show androgen receptor mutations in hormonally insensitive prostate cancer. He did his urology training in the mid 1990s, and commenced private practice early in 1999. His practice is based at North Adelaide, and he visits the Riverland, Kangaroo Island, Stirling and North Eastern community. Dr. Aspinall is co-ordinator of training at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, and employed as a senior visiting specialist at that hospital. To round out a busy professional life, Dr. Aspinall is currently President of the Urological Association of Australasia, S.A. Branch.

Dr. Aspinall's address to the meeting was probably the best explanation of prostate cancer that we have had during this series of meetings. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, interspersed with some humour, this address would have been clearly understood by most people who attended. His attitude to prostate cancer is not constrained by current public attitudes as expressed by the Cancer Council of Australia, and the Federal Government's ineptitude in doing anything to help Australian men become more aware of this disease. In fact, his attitude to PSA testing is quite clearly progressive, and one could almost believe that he had written the current policy of our own SAC about PSA testing. He firmly believes that early detection is the best way of saving lives. No wonder, then, that he says that some of his contemporaries do not always agree with him. Men need more urologists like Dr. Aspinall.

There were some interesting questions from the audience, and some comments suggested that some men would be going back to their doctors with a range of new questions.

In the audience, that night, we had the Mayor of Berri – Barmera Council, Mrs. Margaret Evans, widow of the late “Blue” Evans”, who died of prostate cancer almost two years ago. “Blue” was very well-known throughout the Riverland, particularly as convenor of the local Prostate Cancer Support Group, and as a tireless fundraiser for the Cancer Council. Margaret spoke with us about prostate cancer, and other matters, and praised the Group for conducting this meeting. I doubt that any of us will forget her passionate plea, during the forum, for all wives, partners, etc. to accompany their menfolk to the doctors and for treatments, and to be aware of what the doctors were telling them, and, above all, to ask questions of the doctors. It was some very sensible advice, but spoken with passion.

Since the meeting, we have received a letter from Michelle Wilson, (Riverland) Health Promotion Officer, who thanked us all for presenting the evening. In her letter to Jeff, she stated “I was very impressed with the professionalism and organization that you and your group displayed”, and offered assistance in the future. In addition, discussions on the night indicated that some of our members may be invited back to the area to address service clubs.

## **OTHER AWARENESS MEETINGS**

It was hoped that we would be able to discuss arrangements for the next awareness meeting, planned to be conducted in the City of Onkaparinga, at tonight’s meeting. However, the Prostate Cancer Support Onkaparinga Group has not made a decision about whether they wish to proceed with an awareness meeting on their own initiative, or whether they wish our Group to conduct that meeting. I have outlined our position to the group Leader, John Shields, i.e., that we are quite prepared to conduct such a meeting (probably at Woodcroft, because of the facilities available) and would cooperate with that group in the process. On the other hand, if they decide to conduct such a meeting under their own initiative, we will not interfere. That matter will now be deferred.

John was not previously aware that we had a long-standing request from the local health authorities to conduct an awareness evening at Woodcroft, and apparently had had some discussion with a member of his own support group, with the intention of conducting such a meeting.

## **TEST FOR CANCER**

Thousands of lives could be saved each year with a ground-breaking test for major cancers.

A simple and cheap measure of hormones in the blood could identify people at higher risk of developing the disease. Doctors could then give them crucial advice on diet and lifestyle.

British researchers who have just carried out a study involving more than 10,000 people believe the discovery will rival cholesterol testing as an early warning system. (*“The Advertiser” 24/4/04*)

## **GARLIC REDUCES PROSTATE CANCER**

In Shanghai, when diets of men with prostate cancer were compared with other males, it was discovered that 10g of onion/garlic (especially garlic) per day was associated with lower prostate cancer levels. Authors cite other population studies that associate garlic and onion consumption with lower risk of stomach, colon, throat and breast cancers. (*Natural Healthy Living, Autumn/Winter 2004*)

## **HOW DID THEY FIND IT?**

Noticed an article in the “Confidential” column (usually short articles about showbiz and the like) of “The Advertiser” dated 30<sup>th</sup> April 2004. This article concerned the pop duet of the Belperio sisters, and their forthcoming participation in a fundraiser for the Leukaemia Foundation. In the event, the sisters intend to dedicate their performance to a cousin, Nicholas Tripoi-Baslis, aged 2 years.

Nicholas was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour in his prostate in August, and is undergoing chemotherapy treatment.

It seems an incredibly young age to be diagnosed with such a tumour, and one wonders how it was located in one so young. At that age, one would not expect the prostate to be developed to a stage where it was large enough to even accommodate a tumour. It is said that the prostate does not begin to develop until puberty. There must be an interesting story about the symptoms, and how medical people managed to locate and diagnose the tumour. I have heard of teenagers having PSA tests, but I did not think that a two year old boy would be a candidate for a PSA test.

We sincerely hope that this little fellow is cured of his tumour, and goes on to live a long and healthy life. Kind of gives the lie to the oft-repeated slogan about it being an old man’s disease, though.

## **FAT DRUG FOUND TO RETARD PROSTATE TUMOUR GROWTH**

American scientists believe a drug commonly prescribed to treat obesity may also inhibit the growth of prostate tumours.

The scientists compared normal prostate cells with prostate cancer cells grown in mice. They discovered that the latter are affected by increased activity of an enzyme known as fatty acid synthase – the final enzyme in the body's cellular conversion from carbohydrates to fat. They identified the anti-obesity drug orlistat as an inhibitor of the enzyme, and administered orlistat to mice carrying prostate tumours. The drug was able to inhibit the tumour growth.

The findings from the Burnham Institute, a medical research centre in California, appear in the journal *Cancer research*.  
(*The Age*, 16/3 p5)

## **ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS – IMPROVEMENTS FOR CANCER SUFFERERS**

Cancer sufferers may be able to double life expectancy using alternative therapies such as low-fat vegetarian diets and meditation.

Melbourne researchers have discovered combining alternative therapies with conventional treatment improves quality of life, and may prolong it. A Swinburne University study assessed a 10-day residential cancer support programme run in the Yarra Valley by the Gawler Foundation. The programme, started by cancer survivor Ian Gawler in 1981, combines a low-fat, vegetarian diet with relaxation, meditation and positive thinking.

Preliminary results of the study of 72 people found patients were less anxious, stressed, confused and depressed after the programme. And they showed a big drop in levels of the hormone cortisol, which is linked to immunity.

Researcher Professor Avni Sali, from Swinburne's Graduate School of Integrative Medicine said stimulating the body's defences could prolong life. (*Herald Sun*, 16/3 p22)

## **HOW GREEN TEA CAN COMBAT CANCER**

The secret of green tea's anti-cancer properties has been uncovered. Numerous studies suggest that green tea helps protect against a range of cancers, including lung, prostate and breast cancer. This has been attributed to an antioxidant called epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG).

Now, Hirofumi Tachibana's team at Kyushu University in Japan has shown that EGCG inhibits tumour cell growth by binding to a receptor on cells called 67 LR. A variety of tumours produce abnormally high levels of 67 LR, and the receptor is thought to be involved in the spread of cancers through the body.

As part of the work, the team showed that the growth of human lung cancer cells that have the receptor slows significantly when they are exposed to EGCG at the concentrations reached in the body after drinking just two or three cups of green tea. The research is reported in *Nature Structural and Molecular Biology*. (*New Scientist*, 20/3 p19)

## **PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT HOPE**

Recurrence of cancer after a diseased prostate is removed is not necessarily as dire as doctors once believed, and radiation could save the lives of many men with such a condition, a study found.

Until now, doctors believed that certain ominous signs, including rising levels of a protein called PSA, usually meant that the cancer had not only returned, but had spread to other parts of the body, and was incurable. But the study suggests that many of these men can be cured with radiation because the cancer has not spread. (*Herald Sun*, 18/3 p30)

## **TESTS IDENTIFY HIGH CANCER RISK MEN**

Two new tests may predict who is most at risk of two top cancer killers, colon and prostate cancer, United States researchers say.

One test can show which men might be at most risk of colon cancer, while the other points to who is most likely to die from prostate cancer if surgery or radiation fails.

Dr. Jang Ma and colleagues found that men with long-time high levels of C-peptide – an indicator of insulin production – had triple the risk of developing colorectal cancer. Such patients may be able to eat better and exercise more to prevent cancer, though no study has shown this will work. (*West Australian* 10/4 p8)

## **PHENOXODIOL FOR PROSTATE CANCER**

Men with advanced prostate cancer have been given new hope after an experimental anti-cancer drug tried in W.A. shrank the cancer.

Research presented yesterday at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research in Florida found that the drug Phenoxodiol helped men with terminal prostate cancer who were otherwise untreatable. Promising news also was expected for women, with research showing its effectiveness in treating advanced ovarian cancer due out this week.

The prostate cancer trials were done in Perth and Melbourne, with 21 of the 24 patients from W.A. It was the first time an oral form of the drug had been used in men with prostate cancer, and was given in doses ranging from 20mg to 400mg three times a day for three months.

Although the study was looking mainly at the safety and dosage of the drug, researchers got a sneak preview of its effectiveness when half of the men on higher doses showed reduced levels of prostate-specific antigen – PSA – a protein normally secreted by the prostate and a well-known marker used to detect prostate cancer. (*West Australian, 1/4 p16*)

## **ASPIRIN MAY REDUCE PROSTATE CANCER RISK**

Aspirin may reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer, the most common cancer among Australian men, a study has found.

Men who regularly take aspirin have a 15% lower risk of developing the disease than non-users, and those who take two or more pills a day have 20% less risk, according to the study of 30,000 American men. About a third of the men said they took aspirin daily, although information on whether they took adult or baby-strength aspirin was not collected.

After an average of four years follow-up, 1338 prostate cancers were diagnosed in the group. The cancer risk was 15% lower among men who took one aspirin a day compared with those who took no aspirin, and 20% lower among those who took two pills or more a day, said Lori Sakoda, a cancer institute scientist who led the research. (*Age, Melbourne 13/4 p5*)

## **TESTOSTERONE SHOT A CANCER RISK FOR OLDER MEN**

Grumpy old men who take testosterone supplements in a bid to relieve their symptoms of “male menopause” could be increasing their risk of developing prostate cancer.

US research has found that men over 50 who have high blood levels of a certain form of testosterone have a greater risk of prostate cancer. The researchers from John Hopkins University and the US National Institute on Ageing said the finding throws doubt on the safety of giving men testosterone replacement therapy.

Male menopause, or “andropause”, is supposedly caused by a drop in testosterone levels as men age. Symptoms of the syndrome include fatigue, memory loss, irritability, mood swings and loss of libido. The latest study involved almost 3000 blood samples taken over a 40 year period from 759 men, 111 of whom developed prostate cancer.

Head of the research, J. Kellogg Parsons, said those men who had the highest levels of a form of testosterone – called free testosterone – were most likely to have prostate cancer. (*The Australian, 11/5 p3*)

## **PROSTATE CANCER FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA RAFFLE**

The Foundation currently has a new raffle available to the public, with a prize of a share portfolio of 330 Westpac share and 650 Coles Myer shares (approximate value \$10,000, as at 16<sup>th</sup> February 2004). Tickets cost \$3.00 each – any takers in our Group?

## **PROSTATE CANCER: SOY IN A DIET A MUST FOR MEN**

A diet rich in soy could protect men against prostate cancer and even stop them going bald, according to research. Scientists have identified a potent ingredient in Soya beans, soy sauce, tofu and soy milk that suggests they should be part of every man's daily diet.

A little-known molecule, created in the intestine when soy is digested, helps “block” a hormone that leads to prostate cancer. The molecule, called equol, stops DHT (dihydrotestosterone) in its tracks, according to research published in the Journal of Biology of reproduction. (*Mercury, Hobart 15/4 p4*)