



Prostate Cancer  
Foundation  
of Australia

# PROSTATE SUPPORTER

Newsletter of the Prostate Cancer Support Groups  
of South Australia and Northern Territory

[www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

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Volume 2: Number 2

## Success with Australian Government grant funds

**Generous federal support will provide new resources for all local support groups, reports PCFA's Paul Redman.**

THE Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia has learned of its recent success in obtaining valuable Australian Government Volunteer Grants from the foundation's 2008 program submission.

During October 2008, the PCFA applied for an equipment grant for all support groups across Australia. Early in 2009, the application was approved in full.

PCFA support group services manager Paul Redman is now seeking information from each support group on what equipment each support group needs from two packages approved by the Australian Government.

This is a very exciting development for the PCFA, as this represents substantial

funding for support groups from the Australian Government for the first time.

PCFA and the support groups are hopeful that this connection with the federal government to continue while the grants program continues to be available.

In conjunction with the men's health ambassador training program that has just commenced, the federal government has now become one of the largest sponsors of the PCFA.

PCFA chief executive officer Andrew Giles is extremely grateful for the vision of the Australian Government to support men's health awareness in such tangible ways – especially in such difficult financial times as we are now experiencing.

Newsletters can also be read online at [www.pcagsa.org.au/pages/supporter.html](http://www.pcagsa.org.au/pages/supporter.html)



Ian Fisk shares good cheer with Angry Anderson

### in brief...

**SMILES AND SUPPORT FROM ANGRY:** Prostate Cancer Support Group members Ian Fisk, Jeff Roberts, Phil Davis, Ray Power and John Shields worked on an information/awareness stall at the Combined Rural Traders conference in Adelaide from February 13 to 15, sharing an area with Foundation 49 – and directly opposite a Blunderstone Footwear stall being manned by Angry Anderson, who has been very involved in the PCFA advertising campaign promoting prostate cancer awareness. Read John Shields' report about the day on Page 4 of this newsletter.

**CONTRIBUTIONS** from all Support Group members to the newsletters are welcome; contact Mel Behn at Foster Hill PR and Marketing by phoning (08) 8231 3555 or email items and images to [prostate-news@fosterhill.com.au](mailto:prostate-news@fosterhill.com.au).

**CONFUSING** publication dates appeared on the cover of the previous newsletter. Members have requested a date on each monthly edition that stretches across two months, to signify reporting on the previous month and pointing to activities for the current month. Unfortunately, the first edition for 2009 was wrong; it should have been marked January/February. Hunble apologies.

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99  
or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

**COMING EVENTS****MARCH MEETING**

The Action Group will next meet in the upstairs meeting room of the Cancer Council SA building, 202 Greenhill Rd, Eastwood at 5.30pm on Tuesday March 10. At present, entry is through the front door on Greenhill Rd.

The Action Group will be running an information booth at the Man Alive! festival on the Semaphore foreshore lawns on **SUNDAY MARCH 15**, from 10am to 4pm. This is a free festival for the whole family to attend.

• For more information about the Action Group, visit the South Australian Prostate Cancer Action Group's dedicated website, with detailed archives containing its newsletters, at <http://www.pcagsa.org.au>

# Semaphore festival set to come alive yet again

**The Prostate Cancer Action Group will again be attending Semaphore's Men's Health Festival, as Jeff Roberts reports.**

THE next activity of the Action Group will be to participate in Man Alive! 2009, a free public festival designed for the whole family to attend. The event will be held on the Semaphore Foreshore Reserve on Sunday March 15 from 10am until 4pm.

Hosted by TV personality Graeme Goodings, the festival's purpose is to promote men's health and well-being, and to celebrate men's contribution to our community. A wide range of health services and community groups will be attending and they will be complemented by fun activities and a quality entertainment program.

Action Group Members will be running a booth with a display of brochures and speaking to people on prostate cancer issues and the need to raise awareness about

the illness, its diagnosis and various treatment options.

In past years this has proved to be a very successful event and with favourable weather a large crowd should attend.

Free Health Screening Checks for men will be available at the festival.

The event is organised by Enfield Primary Health Care Services.

## **PROGRESS ON NEW MURRAY BRIDGE GROUP**

A MEETING was held at Murray Bridge on February 6 to assess the possibility of forming a Support Group in the area. Murray Bridge has a population of about 18,000 people and for some years has seemed a likely place for a support group to form. The planning meeting was a great success with 23 attending (six of these were visiting

support group members from Adelaide). Importantly, three people from Murray Bridge indicated their willingness to take some form of leadership roles in the new support group.

The Action Group would like to mention the excellent promotional work arranged by Karyn Foster of Foster Hill that helped make the initial planning meeting such a success.

A further planning meeting at Murray Bridge will now take place on March 5, to arrange the first official meeting of the new support group.

## **KAROONDA DEFERRED**

THE possibility of an awareness presentation by the Action Group at Karoonda in the early months of this year has been put on hold. An event is now hoped to be held around May/June 2009.

**Research findings and news items from around the world ... Submitted by Trevor Hunt**

## **Cancer survivors using various complementary therapies**

ALMOST half of cancer survivors surveyed by an American Cancer Society study use several types of complementary and alternative therapies.

Researchers analysed data on more than 4000 survivors of 10 different cancers and found that the most common forms of complementary and

alternative therapy were prayer/spiritual practice (61.4 per cent), relaxation (44.3 per cent), faith/spiritual healing (42.4 per cent) and nutritional supplements and vitamins (40.1 per cent).

Less common forms of therapy included meditation (15 per cent), religious counselling (11.3 per cent),

massage (11.2 per cent) and support groups (9.7 per cent).

"Methods such as acupuncture and hypnosis were used by fewer than two per cent of cancer survivors, even though recent studies found them to be useful in relieving some cancer-related symptoms, such as pain,"

said American Cancer Society studyco-author Dr Ted Gansler.

The study also revealed that women, young people, high-income earners and those with tertiary education are more likely to use complementary therapies.

• Source: *Cancer Research UK*, August 2008.

**The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)**

## Prostate Cancer Support and Awareness: ADELAIDE GROUP

## COMING EVENTS

**MARCH 16 MEETING:**  
The Adelaide Group meets on the third Monday of each month in the Park View Room of the Fullarton Park Centre, 411 Fullarton Rd, Fullarton. Instead of a formal presentation, guest speaker **Dr Alan Stapleton** is making himself available for a question and answer session. Please come prepared with questions.

Speaker for April 20 is **Kevin O'Shaughnessy**, talking about his research on men who have had a prostatectomy.

• For more information, visit the Adelaide Group's dedicated website at [www.psaadelaide.org](http://www.psaadelaide.org) or ring Ian Fisk on 8296 3350.

# Members respond to group leadership crisis

The Adelaide Group is looking forward to a good year with the introduction of new office bearers for 2009, as Ian Fisk reports.

A SUCCESSFUL Annual General Meeting for the Adelaide Support Group on February 16 has resolved the ongoing problem regarding executive positions within the group: Jeff Roberts, Ross Daniels and Ian Fisk have agreed to rotate the chairman/convenor position during 2009.

Even more important is that Pam Daniels has agreed to fill the role of supper co-ordinator! Ian Fisk is secretary and treasurer, and Pam Fisk will continue to look after the name tags. We still do need a librarian though. Any volunteers?

Following the business (financial report by retiring

Treasurer Arthur Seager, summary of year by Ian Fisk and the election of officers, new account signatories etc) a general discussion was held.

The general discussion included:

- An update on the condition of group member Trevor Hunt. At the time of writing, Trev was still not in much pain, but has breathing issues requiring regular oxygen and is also undergoing chemotherapy.
- Information passed on to members about the Cancer Council SA Relay for Life, which is being held on Saturday March 28.
- Jeff Roberts spoke about progress on the formation of a new Murray Bridge support

group, and also spoke about the Prostate Cancer Action Group's activities and its urgent need for new members.

• Upcoming training for the Men's Health Ambassador Speaker program was also mentioned. Interested parties should note that this will not be held in Adelaide, but new and existing SA Ambassadors will be trained in Canberra in early April.

• Two new Adelaide group members, Bob and Graham, told the group where they were in their prostate cancer journeys.

• In general discussion, other members spoke of their positive experiences with pomegranate juice and resveratrol.

## And now for something completely different ... a touch of humour

### WHAT WORDS REALLY MEAN

**Divorce:** Future tense of marriage.

**Compromise:** The art of dividing a cake in such a way that everybody believes he got the biggest piece.

**Classic:** Books that people praise but do not read.

**Smile:** A curve that can set a lot of things straight.

**Office:** A place where you can relax after your strenuous home life.

**Etc:** A sign to make others believe you know more than you do.

**Committee:** Individuals who can do nothing individually and sit to decide that nothing can be done together.

**Experience:** The name men give to their mistakes.

**Philosopher:** A fool who torments himself during life, to be spoken of when dead.

**Father:** A banker provided by nature.

**Criminal:** A guy no different from the rest ... except that he got caught.

**Boss:** Someone who is early when you are late and late when you are early.

**Politician:** One who shakes your hand before elections and your confidence after.

**Doctor:** A person who kills your ills by pills, and kills you with his bills.

• A husband and wife are on the 9th green when suddenly she collapses from a heart attack. "Help me, dear!" she groans to her husband. The husband calls 911 on his cell phone, talks for a few minutes, then picks up his putter and lines up his putt. His wife stares at him in disbelief. "I'm dying over here and you're putting!" "Don't worry, dear," says the husband calmly, "they found a doctor on the second hole and he's coming to help you." "Well, how long will it take for him to get here?" she asks feebly. "No time at all," says her husband. "Everybody back there has already agreed to let him play through."



## COMING EVENTS FOR 2009

### MARCH 4 MEETING:

Guest speaker will be Loretta McFarlane from the Council On The Ageing, and the subject of her presentation will be Beyond Maturity Blues. This Support Group meeting will be held in the boardroom at Noarlunga Community Hospital, Alexander Kelly Drive, Noarlunga, on Wednesday, March 4 at 6.30pm.

### APRIL MEETING:

The support group's meeting on April 1 will be a Round Robin general discussion evening.

• *For more information, visit the City of Onkaparinga Support Group's dedicated website at [www.pcsog.org](http://www.pcsog.org)*

• Special thanks are extended to the City of Onkaparinga Support Group sponsors:

- Southern Primary Health Woodcroft
- Port Noarlunga-Christies Beach RSL Sub Branch
- toneraction Christies Beach
- The Original Open Market

– and to all who provide valuable support to our group, especially the **City of Onkaparinga Council**.

# Tips for improving safety and security

Identifying security problem areas gave the Onkaparinga group valuable safety information, reports John Shields.

**S**AFETY For Seniors was the subject of a very informative interactive talk at the City of Onkaparinga Group's February meeting, presented by Christine Mitchell from the Council On The Ageing – with many sensible safeguards for the group members to consider.

Christine led the audience through a recognised Safety and Security Checklist, highlighting the most important personal safety aspects that included:

• **Credit Cards:** Know when to expect your new credit card and always sign it as soon as you get it. If it does not arrive as planned, contact your bank promptly. Don't give your credit card information to a stranger over the phone and remember that if a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is (Beware that some calls from overseas are charging you for the call, so hang up ASAP).

• **Emergency Telephone Numbers:** Create automatic dialling buttons on your phones for emergency contacts, marking them as Name-ICE (In Case of Emergency) followed by the number, and have more than one ICE number on your home and mobile phones. Also, let a trusted neighbour know if you are going away and make sure that you have each other's mobile phone numbers, including your ICE numbers.

## COMBINED RURAL TRADERS CONFERENCE

The PCFA Information/Awareness stall at the Combined Rural Traders conference in Adelaide from February 13 to 15, was attended by several shifts of volunteers that included John Shields with Ian Fisk, Jeff Roberts, Phil Davis and Ray Power. The small table adjacent to the Foundation 49 Free Men's Health Checks stall proved to be an ideal location, as more than 300 health checks were performed and it was a pleasure to be able to hand the PCFA's "What every man should know and be a man" pamphlets to men who had just completed their health check.

## IMPROVEMENT IDEAS WELCOMED

Chairman of the PCFA Central Australian Chapter (and vice president of the City of Onkaparinga Group) Malcolm Ellis is happy to inform the chapter of any ideas from group members about improving prostate cancer support groups. Airing these ideas at the Onkaparinga Group's March meeting will enable them to be tabled at the next chapter council meeting on March 19, as discussion from all groups in the chapter will have top priority. For more details, phone Malcolm on 8326 5588 or 0416 268 601, or email [malell@inet.net.au](mailto:malell@inet.net.au)

• **Identify your valuable property:** Marking pens are available from public libraries to place your markings on items.

• **Don't allow strangers into your home** to do work without proof of identity.

• **Always lock your car**, even if leaving it for only a short while.

• **Make certain your house number** is clearly visible from the street. Homes without a street number can be very difficult for an emergency vehicle driver to locate, especially at night. Units and flats that have a block of letterboxes at the property entrance should also have numbers clearly visible near

their entrances, to ensure that individual dwellings can be easily found.

Christine also impressed upon everyone the need to check with doctors and insurance companies whether it is still permissible and safe to drive vehicles while taking some medications. If a doctor has not informed you, be sure to check for yourself.

Christine provided everyone at the meeting with a Safety and Security Checklist, so that we could each perform a simple safety audit to identify areas where security in and around our homes can be improved. If any other group members would like a copy, please contact John Shields.

## Mitcham Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Welcoming new members

**Making new members feel comfortable is a priority in 2009, reports Mitcham group chairperson Terry Harbour.**

THE Mitcham group started 2009 in very positive fashion, attracting more than 20 people (and several apologies) for its first meeting of the year on February 25 – and it was especially heartening to welcome a few new members: Peter and Rosemary Midtvik.

This was also the group's AGM, with official business preceding the normal meeting. After all official positions in the group were declared vacant, the following people were elected to fill the vacancies:

**Chairperson:** Terry Harbour

**Deputy Chairperson:**  
Roland Harris

**Treasurer:** John Baulderstone

**Minutes Secretary:** Graeme Bradley

**Liaison/Welcoming Officer:**  
Dianne Baulderstone

**Promotions officer:** Jeff Roberts

It was very pleasing to see members readily accepting these roles, which are necessary for the smooth and efficient running of the group.

With all the formalities of the AGM out of the way, the membership then enjoyed an informal general meeting.

### WELCOMING KIT

JEFF ROBERTS showed the audience a “welcoming kit” that has been designed for presentation to new visitors joining the group.

The members discussed the importance of having and providing such a kit, coupled with a welcoming/liaison officer who can greet newcomers and make them feel welcome.

Jeff also handed out and discussed a survey form for all members to fill out and return. He explained that it was designed to collect

information which would allow us to ensure that future meetings best meet the needs of all members.

### OPTIONS CONSIDERED

THE GROUP went on to discuss and decide on budget submissions to the PCFA, some of the highlights of the PCFA National Conference in November 2008, and upcoming men's health-related functions.

The evening concluded with the screening of part of a DVD from the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, focusing on “Treatment Options”. The segment was presented by Professor Phillip Stricker, who explained the many issues that a man diagnosed with prostate cancer needs to consider and seek expert advice on before making a decision on which treatment option could lead to the best outcomes.

## COMING EVENTS

### MARCH 26 MEETING

The next Mitcham Support Group meeting will be held on Thursday March 26, in the Colonel Light Gardens RSL club rooms at 4 Prince George Parade, Colonel Light Gardens, from 7pm. Guest speaker will be Ms Leigh Pretty, clinical practice consultant in the Urology Department, Repatriation General Hospital, and her topic will be: “Bladder function: What's normal and what's not?”

• For more information on events and group activities, visit the Mitcham Group's dedicated website at [www.psamitcham.org](http://www.psamitcham.org)

## Research findings and news items from around the world

Submitted by Trevor Hunt

### Prostate cancer found to stimulate nerve growth and density levels

PROSTATE cancer can promote the growth of new nerves that are associated with more aggressive tumors, according to a research team at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston.

Prostate cancer follows the growth of nerves, though this is the first study to find that prostate tumors actually promote

nerve growth. The research team says this new finding is comparable to the discovery that tumors promote the growth of new blood vessels (angiogenesis) to nourish themselves.

“It represents an important new target in prostate cancer treatment, as prostate cancers are more aggressive when

neurogenesis is present,” says study author Dr Gustavo Ayala.

The researchers calculated the density of nerves in human prostate tissues from prostate cancer patients and from people who died of other conditions. They found that nerve density was much higher in those with prostate cancer and

precancerous lesions. They also created a 3-D computer model that simulated the growth of nerves and axons (which carry nerve messages) in prostate cancer, which showed that blocking a protein called semaphorin 4F prevented the growth of new nerves and axons.

• Source: *www.healthday.com* 3/12/08

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## Barossa and Gawler Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Record numbers attend meeting

New support initiatives to help regional groups have inspired Barossa and Gawler members, as Alan Hall reports.

THE decision to launch the Barossa and Gawler Prostate Support Group's 2009 events program with a catered dinner meeting in the Barossa Council building was vindicated when a record number of members attended.

Outstanding cooperation from the council in preparing the venue and from the caterers in providing an excellent three-course meal ensured a smooth-running and enjoyable evening for the 30 people who attended the meeting.

Barossa Mayor Brian Hurn welcomed everyone on behalf of the council and commended the group on accepting his invitation to hold a meeting in a very fine building which has been the council's home for

about a year. He emphasised that the council building is actually owned by the rate-payers and should be regarded as a community asset.

Special guests at the meeting were PFCA official Paul Redman and Karyn Foster, whose presence underlined the levels of support that is now available for regional groups, which in the past have sometimes felt rather isolated and neglected.

Paul Redman's powerpoint presentation, covering many aspects of support groups and their place in the community, was appreciated by everyone and provided ideas and information which will be discussed at the group's next meeting on March 17.

Another welcome initiative that has helped remove feelings of isolation for regional groups has been the decision of the newly-formed Central Australia Chapter of PCFA to hold an executive council meeting in the Vine Inn Hotel in Nuriootpa on March 19.

The Barossa and Gawler Support Group members have been invited to attend this meeting as observers.

Our group's next meeting will continue with the formula of approaching business in a social setting. It will commence at 2pm and will attempt to clarify the group's future in terms of function and organisation, including a decision about the program of meetings for 2009.

### COMING EVENT

#### MARCH MEETING

- The Barossa and Gawler support group's next meeting will be on **Tuesday, March 17**, at 17 Hill Street West, Angaston, commencing at 2pm. The meeting will be combined with afternoon tea and a small plate of food from everyone attending the meeting would be appreciated.

It will also be necessary to consider the opportunity to receive a valuable package of electronic equipment as a result of a successful submission by PCFA to the Australian Government.

## Research findings and news items from around the world

Submitted by Trevor Hunt

### US experts urge adoption of prostate cancer 'man-o-gram' tests

PROSTATE cancer experts have urged US Congress and the Obama administration to make a major research commitment to find better prostate cancer detection methods, including a "man-o-gram" – a sophisticated ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging method to find dangerous prostate tumors, akin to mammogram scans used to find breast tumors.

Dr Faina Shtern, who heads the Boston-based nonprofit AdMeTech Foundation coordinating

the advocacy effort, says \$500 million in research funding is needed over five years.

Dr Shtern is critical of blood tests measuring levels of a protein produced by the prostate gland called prostate-specific antigen. Elevated PSA levels may indicate prostate cancer, but benign conditions can also raise levels. Men with elevated PSA often must have an invasive biopsy to test prostate tissue for cancer, though only about 30 per cent of men who have the biopsy actually

turn out to have prostate cancer.

Experts believe that many cancers detected after PSA screening are so minor they would never present a threat if left untreated.

Because there is no reliable imaging technique to guide the selection of tissue for the biopsies, doctors take random plugs of prostate blindly and may miss tumors.

"We need to be able to find the cancers that are there that are going to be significant – and only target those," says Shtern.

More than two dozen experts from institutions including Johns Hopkins University, Harvard Medical School, the University of Chicago, the University of Miami and Stanford University, signed letters to Congress and the US National Institutes of Health, which funds medical research, saying more accurate imaging technology would lead to better guidance for diagnosis, biopsy and minimally invasive treatment.

• Source: Reuters, 19/1/09



## McLaren Districts Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Strengths of support group's best attributes come to the fore

The year didn't quite start as planned, though the McLaren Districts support group found they have a lot of value to offer each other, as Bryan Hearn reports.

IT was unfortunate that the 2009 calendar of events started poorly for the McLaren Vale group – our guest speaker failed to attend the first meeting of the year in February – though it shows the strength of this group as it was able to make the most of an unfortunate situation.

Co-ordinator Bryan Hearn provided members with a brief update regarding the establishment of the Central Australia Chapter and explained where the McLaren Districts support group sits within the overall administration of PCFA, on a local and national basis.

Details were also provided about all of the other PCFA chapters that have so far been established and how they serve their networks of local support groups.

### VOLUNTEERS THANKED

BRYAN thanked all members who had volunteered to assist at the group's Awareness Day

### COMING EVENT

#### THURSDAY MARCH 19

The McLaren Districts group will next meet in the administration building at the rear of the McLaren Vale & Districts War Memorial Hospital, Aldersey St, McLaren Vale, at 7pm on Thursday, March 19.

An invitation has been extended to prominent builder, prostate cancer survivor and generous cancer equipment donor Gordon Pickard to attend as guest speaker, though it is likely he will be replaced by his "right-hand man" Ron Wall, who has been through everything beside Gordon. We won't know until the night who will be attending.

Contact group president Bryan Hearn on 8323 7924 or 0410 539 274, to confirm your attendance and meeting details.

held in December. Some of the members present related details of incidents that occurred during the day, along with details of comments made by members of the public. One common theme discussed by the volunteers was how much some male passers by tried to avoid the stall, while their wives were more than

happy to engage in discussion and receive the information on offer.

One recipient of information has since visited his doctor and subsequently received a result that indicates he may be in the early stages of prostate cancer. He has already undertaken a course of action to resolve the situation

and is very pleased that the Awareness Day stand provided him with the information and encouragement to undergo an examination.

### NEW MEMBER INPUT

ANOTHER new member at the group meeting had no hesitation informing members about details of his "journey" so far. While some may consider this a baptism of fire, he spoke confidently and without embarrassment, prompting much favourable comment from members.

The next hour was filled with general discussion amongst members who spoke of their condition and treatment and any problems encountered. Several members who are not "sufferers," but are very interested and joined in this open discussion with gusto.

It proved to be a very interesting meeting and I don't think anybody really minded too much about the absence of a guest speaker.

## Research findings and news items from around the world

Submitted by Trevor Hunt

### Single men less likely to get screened for prostate cancer

MARRIED MEN and men living with a permanent partner are more prone to get early screening for prostate cancer, according to a study published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*. Men with a

family history of prostate cancer were 40 per cent less likely to be screened if they lived alone compared to those who were married or shared a home with a significant other. The study, however, did not examine

why this is so. "In terms of motivating people to get screened, there may be benefit in targeting wives or significant others as well as men," says research author Lauren P. Wallner. Almost 2500 white Minnesota men,

age 40 to 79, answered questionnaires on prostate cancer. Those with a family history of the disease were 50 per cent more likely to be screened than those without.

[www.healthday.com](http://www.healthday.com)

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

## Payneham Prostate Cancer Support Group

# Enthusiastic show of support for new group's inauguration

**The launch of the Payneham support group was warmly accepted by locals, as group chairman Phil Davis reports.**

IT was a tremendous privilege to chair the new Payneham Group's first public meeting at the Payneham RSL on February 17, and while we were all initially a little nervous and curious, we soon got to know each other, relax and feel more at ease.

We were fortunate that several people were attending their first Prostate Cancer Support and Awareness Group meeting, and contributed to the meeting in a positive and forthright manner. We were all reminded that being diagnosed with prostate cancer is a great leveller – and that as a group we can share our wisdom and support others while advancing interest in prostate cancer.

Statistics show that attending a Prostate Cancer Support and Awareness Group helps sufferers to live longer, and that people with strong social ties enjoy better health.

As meetings progress a lot of information will be presented by a variety of speakers.

The group's first speaker was Kevin O'Shaughnessy, who has not followed a typical path to become a registered nurse, having been a hotelier for 10 years before nursing.

Kevin, currently undertaking an honours degree in Medical Science at UniSA, is involved in research investigating themes that emerge from the experiences of men in the

medium-to-long-term phase following prostatectomy for prostate cancer.

He initially conducted a literature search, followed by one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with men who had undergone a prostatectomy for prostate cancer.

Kevin's research highlighted some common issues among men who have had a prostatectomy. These included:

- Fear of cancer recurrence
- Quality of life issues
- Sexual health and impotence issues
- Incontinence
- Body image concerns
- Aging difficulties, expressed by younger men living longer with post-operative complications.
- Regret concerning personal treatment choices.
- Embarrassment about changes to their bodies after treatment

Kevin was surprised that literature he had read did not reflect several themes that men being studied felt were most significant, including:

- **Isolation:** Inflicted people are more inclined to stay home, and some males became more withdrawn.
- **Love:** How it changes within relationships of patients.



**Kevin O'Shaughnessy addresses the first Payneham meeting.**

- **Hope:** Believing that you can get over the illness and be cured with minimal side effects.

- **Health literacy deficits:** Recognising a need to improve gaps in available materials

- **Coping skills:** Mostly not understood or supported for men.

- **Support Group Sizes:** Patients preferred an intimate group of three or four people.

The men interviewed identified needing help with pre-operative education, decision making, post-operative education, anxiety, emotional and relationship support. Kevin concluded that men need to be fully informed about a prostatectomy and its likely biological, emotional, social and psychological impact.

Further research into the experience of men who have already undergone a prostatectomy is needed and requires frank and honest feedback from men concerning their own experiences.

## COMING EVENTS

**MARCH MEETING**  
The Payneham Support Group will next meet in the Payneham RSL Clubrooms, 360 Payneham Rd, Payneham at 7pm on Tuesday March 17. General Discussion will be followed by an address from Paul Redman, support group service manager of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia. Paul will speak about his role and involvement with support groups and explain the PCFA's many activities.

**APRIL 21:** Dr Graham Lyons will speak about diet, anti-prostate cancer foods and supplements.

**MAY 19:** Naturopath Faith Best will deliver a Health and Wellness Presentation.

**JUNE 16:** Speaker will be Ashleigh Moore, chair of Cancer Voices.

• For more information, visit the Payneham Support Group's dedicated website at <http://www.pcagsa.org.au/pages/paynehampsag.html>



## Prosper Darwin Prostate Cancer Support Group

### Wet season dampens Darwin group enthusiasm

**A**TTENDANCES at the Darwin group's meetings is down at present because it is in the middle of the wet season (and it is wet), with several regular attendees being either interstate or overseas.

The group is also experiencing some difficulty attracting candidates for PCFA Ambassador training in May. At present, the group has two trained Ambassadors from the initial course held in Melbourne – Allan McEwan and Maurie Blake – plus Keith Williams, who has presented Prostate Cancer awareness sessions for many years.

Guest Speaker at the February

meeting was Dr Mathew George, oncologist at Royal Darwin Hospital, whose powerpoint presentation identified the location and function of the prostate gland and problems that can occur with it, including benign enlargement, prostatitis and cancer.

Dr George explained the need for both the PSA test and DRE in diagnosing prostate cancer followed by ultrasound and biopsy. He explained PSA readings and the Gleason score, as well as age when diagnosed and outcomes related to age and family history. He concluded his informative presentation by speaking about various treatment options.

### COMING EVENT

#### MONDAY MARCH 9

The Darwin Group meets on the second Monday of each month, at the Harbour Room, Christ Church Cathedral, corner of Smith St and the Esplanade, Darwin, at 7.30pm. Instead of a guest speaker at the next meeting on Monday March 9, a further segment will be shown from the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia information DVD *So, I have Prostate Cancer: What now?*

Further items from the Alice Springs Prostate Cancer Support Group will be appearing in the Prostate Supporter newsletter next month.

## Prostate cancer testing pioneer dies in US

**D**R Donald F. Gleason, who devised the Gleason score that is used to help determine the aggressiveness of prostate cancer, died of a heart attack on December 28 at his home in Edina, Minnesota. He was 88.

Dr Gleason was former chief of pathology at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, affiliated with the University of Minnesota where he did most of the research that led to the scoring system being devised in the 1960s through his observations of the cellular architecture of the prostate, the gland that produces seminal fluid. The score is considered the most reliable indicator of the potential for prostate cancer to grow and spread.

The score is based on a pathologist's microscopic examination of prostate tissue

that has been chemically stained after a biopsy. Under a standard microscope, the cells can show in various patterns.

To determine a Gleason score, a pathologist assigns a separate numerical grade to the two most predominant architectural patterns of the cancer cells. The grade depends on how far the cells deviate from normal appearance. The numbers range from 1 (the cells look nearly normal) to 5 (the cells have the most cancerous appearance).

The sum of the two grades is the Gleason score. The lowest possible score is 2, which rarely occurs; the highest is 10. Scores of 2 to 4 are considered low grade; 5 through 7, intermediate grade; and 8 through 10, high grade.

In 1962, Dr George Mellinger



**Dr Donald F. Gleason**

asked Dr Gleason to develop a standardised pathological testing system for prostate cancer. Dr Gleason wrote in a personal narrative that he was well aware of the wide variation that existed in the speed with which prostate cancer spreads, as well as in the architectural patterns seen under a microscope. Many

microscopic classifications existed at the time, but pathologists had difficulty applying them and often devised their own, thereby creating confusion in treatment and evaluating new therapies.

To sharpen comparisons, Dr Gleason based his classification on a small number of changes seen in the architectural arrangement of cancer cells. The patterns were strongly related to survival rates in the first 270 patients, he reported in 1966 in the journal *Cancer Chemotherapy Reports*. Doctors adopted the Gleason score slowly until 1987, when seven leading experts in urology and pathology recommended that it be used uniformly in all scientific publications on prostate cancer. Dr Gleason retired in 1986.

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia freecall hotline is 1800 22 00 99 or visit the website [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

# Helping prostate sufferers to progress beyond the blues

The beyond maturityblues program is promoting greater understanding of depression through the work of COTA Peer Educators, as Jane Barnett reports.

WHEN people sometimes use such words as depression in their conversations with friends, what they are often describing is frustration with health issues, money and their ageing bodies. By comparison, depression is a serious illness with a defined set of symptoms.

Depression is a common illness: about one million Australian adults live with depression each year, making the **beyond maturityblues** program a vital community service to help decrease the stigma that often surrounds depression.

I am the Project Officer for **beyond maturityblues**, a program funded by beyondblue: the national depression initiative. Peer Educators provide free sessions to seniors clubs and groups.

The message with **beyond maturityblues** is that depression is not a normal part of ageing and that it is a health problem, not a weakness.

The program's Peer Educators present a serious topic in a sensitive but light-hearted way; it is not depressing for the group and empowers people who may not have had someone to talk to about the subject of depression before.

The resources for sessions are from beyondblue, with one specific session called Prostate Cancer and Depression/Anxiety, recognising that people with chronic illness are more likely to suffer depression.

One in five Australians will experience depression in their lifetime, with men more likely to experience depression than women, though they are less likely to seek help.

Also, a link between depression and chronic illness is now well documented. Men with prostate cancer are nearly twice as likely to develop depression as men in the general community.

Furthermore, a diagnosis of prostate cancer may also put partners at increased risk of depression.

It is for these reasons that the Council of the Aged (COTA) would like to promote this topic to men's groups and those supporting people with chronic illness.

The **beyond maturityblues** program provides strategies that will help people feel comfortable about supporting relatives or friends who may be experiencing symptoms.

Participants also receive information that assists early recognition of the signs of depression and resources that



COTA peer assessment educator Loretta leads groups through an explanation session on depression.

facilitate access to further assistance.

COTA Seniors Connect and beyondblue, the national depression initiative, are working together on the **beyond maturityblues** program, and are keen to deliver the program's four key messages throughout the community:

- Depression is not a normal part of ageing.
- Depression is a health problem, not a weakness.
- Depression is a treatable illness.
- Information and support about depression is available.

A **beyond maturityblues** Peer Educator can be booked to attend seniors group and social club meetings, to talk

about the signs and symptoms of depression and provide tips for how to manage tough times. The trained Peer Educator leads participants through an interactive session, with opportunities for feedback and questions.

• **FOR MORE information about depression, the treatments available and how to get help, visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or phone 1300 22 4636.**

• **FOR MORE information about the **beyond maturityblues** program or to book a free information session for your group, contact COTA Seniors Connect on 8232 0422 (Country freecall 1800 182 324) or email [bookings@seniorsvoice.org.au](mailto:bookings@seniorsvoice.org.au)**