



Helping Men Know Their Options

Shared Decision Making

By Peter Scholz, PCRI Communications Manager and Insights Editor

Having been involved in an oncology environment for years, I see and hear about many developments in the world of prostate cancer care. There are many exciting advancements in the field of prostate cancer, but as our Executive Director, Mark Scholz, M.D., says, "On its own, the prostate cancer field is resistant to change and in common practice, the disease is being treated the same way it always has been treated. But the medical world needs to embrace the new, advanced ways of treating the disease. Thankfully, knowledge of these advancements is starting to spread through patient channels. As a consequence, the medical world will have to start stepping up its game." Patient oriented support and education organizations are a key factor in the proliferation of this knowledge. They act as a catalyst that pushes these advancements into common practice.

The upcoming implementation of the Healthcare Reform Act enforces what is called "shared decision making," the concept that the doctor and patient must dialogue about different treatment options and side effects before arriving at a decision. For years, the PCRI has strongly believed in the importance of patient empowerment since patients aren't always informed of all of their options in the conversations they have with their doctor. When the patient knows their options their doctors remain accountable, and up-to-date.

Most men only begin looking for information when they are at a crossroads, as Jerry Deans says in his story later in this issue, "Very few people who are diagnosed with prostate cancer have an adequate knowledge base specific to the disease diagnosis, treatment options, side effects, and quality of life." Once diagnosed, the patient has a lot of "catching up" to do. Thankfully, there are many organizations that provide unbiased and trustworthy information to patients that help with the decision process.

In this issue, we introduce the story of Lloyd Ney, who some have termed "the father of patient empowerment." His passion for patient empowerment was an integral part of a process that brought about new standards for treatment and challenged old ones. Following that, Dr. Turner will discuss Taxotere and the exciting new ways that it is being used. Callers from our Helpline will also share a success story about overcoming the "old school" way of treating prostate cancer. And Chuck Strand of Us TOO makes a case for participating in a support group, highlighting the importance of the spirit of teamwork that comes from a support group setting. Finally, Paul Nelson will educate us about recapturing quality of life after treatment.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Insights, and that the stories and articles will help solidify the concept of shared decision making, and how it applies to your experience with prostate cancer.

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