

PROSTATE CANCER...MY STORY

By Robert Pugach, MD

I have just been treated for prostate cancer. This is my personal story. My prostate cancer was diagnosed last year.

My internist, as part of my annual check-up, ordered a PSA blood test and I requested that a "free" PSA be added to the total PSA level that is typically done. The next step was to undergo a biopsy, where a colleague of mine, got the honor/task of doing my biopsy. My biopsy showed a miniscule focus of cancer.

So, what to do about a tiny, moderately aggressive prostate cancer? Well, some would do nothing. I am a candidate for "active surveillance" or "watchful waiting." There are many patients whose cancers will never progress to the point where they pose a danger.

My concern about that approach is that no one really knows what we are waiting for. There is no level of PSA and there is no imaging study that says when we must treat prostate cancer. Add to that the fact that 37% of men have more aggressive or more extensive prostate cancer than what is found on biopsy.

I am not a gambler, especially when it comes to my health. I desire and plan to live a long, healthy life. So, I've decided to have my prostate cancer treated with High Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU).

In the weeks leading up to my treatment, I was surprisingly calm. I can honestly say that I never had a moment of fear, anger, panic or any of the other emotions that many of my patients have shared with me in over 30 years of treating this potentially lethal, terrible disease.

The reason for my attitude was that my cancer was diagnosed at the earliest possible stage. The odds are overwhelmingly likely that it will never return. That meant that I was in charge of my cancer instead of it being in charge of me. I was spared the fear that patients experience when they are diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer that can be extensive or aggressive and, potentially, not curable.

I was also calm because I had the utmost confidence in my doctor. Like me, he had been traveling to other countries for the past 10 years treating patients with HIFU. On the morning of my procedure I awoke at 4:30 AM for my final HIFU preparations arrived at the surgery center.

I woke up in the recovery room four hours later and saw my wife's smiling face. I was a bit groggy, but pain free and comfortable. My doctor confirmed that my procedure went perfectly! Within an hour or so after waking up I was discharged.



There was no pain. The catheter was a bit uncomfortable. I had no ill effects and enjoyed a meal of clam chowder and pizza. By 6:00 p.m., I arrived in San Francisco with prostate cancer and left cancer free. I had a HIFU procedure that has a 3% chance of bladder control problems and a 5-10% chance of erectile dysfunction. Contrast that with surgery

where incontinence rates are typically 35% or higher and erectile dysfunction is common. I was able to return to normal activities 3 days later!

The key to successful treatment of prostate cancer is to have it diagnosed at its earliest stage so HIFU is a treatment option. I can tell you now, from my personal experience, that it's the key to getting on with your life while leaving you whole.

Pacific Coast Urology Medical Center and Western States HIFU is one of the leading medical practices in the US specializing in diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer. Call, 888-735-4336 or visit: www.pacificcoasturology.com and www.hifuprostatecancermd.com

