



Speaking from Experience *Prostate Cancer*

Transcript for chapter 2 of 6: Diagnosis

Dorothy and Patrick - My Probus Club, which meets every month and often has a guest speaker, had a speaker who was a doctor who addressed the club on prostate cancer. I wasn't there but I heard the results of the meeting, and one of the things he did was to say that he felt all men over sixty to sixty-five should have a PSA test done to see if they have any problem.

Robert - My youngest brother, who was very much involved with the family because he was nearby, eventually gave me a call and said, "Look, the doctor has suggested the boys in the family should be tested." In one ear, out the other - didn't think much of it anymore, explained it to my wife, let it be. So one day my wife went to see the doctor and the doctor asked about that, so well, "Maybe he should have a test." So my wife made the appointment, I didn't.

Richard - Mainly going to a doctor for a certificate to a specialist to have sunspots burnt off my face. Just commented that I was getting up a couple of times a night, and give me something to stop it.

Ray - At sixty-five, I was going to do a lot of driving interstate and I wanted to have a full general check.

Richard - That led to a blood test, a PSO blood test. At 20.1, the second one a month later at 21.2, and the doctor thought we'd better investigate further.

Ray - He said, "Ray, there's no reason why we should do all of these tests. You come and see me occasionally and you've got no history. There's no evidence that you need to have these tests." So I said to him, "Are you listening? I would like these tests, and if you're not prepared to do them, I'll go somewhere else." And that changed his mind.

Dorothy and Patrick - I went to my doctor, my GP, and asked him to organise tests for me, and he sent me to a pathologist. They took the blood test. The result came back to him and it appeared that I did have a prostate cancer and I had a reading of 14.4 PSA level.

Ray - Part of the test for prostate cancer is a digital rectal examination and he also did a blood test. As a result of that, he could feel a lump on the prostate and the PSA was at a level of 16. Now, the normal level is anything up to about 4, maybe 5 at that age. But anything over that certainly required some investigation.

Michael - During a visit to the doctor on a purely incidental matter he suggested that I have a test done for my cholesterol, and whilst they were taking a blood test, he decided that it would be a good idea to test my blood for PSA. I simply didn't know anything about it and so I agreed of course. But then they contacted me a few days later and told me that the PSA reading was very, very high and I was to come back immediately for discussions with my GP.

Ray - The surgeon asked me to have a number of other tests, including a bone scan, a biopsy, CAT scans, and so forth, and these are not pleasant tests. But I had these and then he wasn't happy with a couple of them and asked me to do some more tests. And then he told me the news, that I had prostate cancer and that really shakes the system because anybody being told that they have any form of cancer, you suddenly... your world is turned upside down.

Michael - The surgeon suggested that I go to a pathological laboratory, whereby they put my whole body through a massive series of tests, including CAT scans and ultrasounds of the pelvic area to test whether in fact the cancer had spread. And they took lots and lots of x-rays and then they also performed some biopsy tests on the prostate, which involves having a needle fired into it and then they withdraw the needle and it contains some tissue which is then examined.

Dorothy and Patrick - He examined me. He said he couldn't feel anything much but he thought he ought to take some biopsies. He made an appointment for me to come back in another week and they took biopsies. The biopsies showed that there was indeed a tumour there and he told me it was about a half a millimetre in diameter and it was going to kill me if I lived to one hundred and twenty. And I said, "I don't think that's very likely." So he said, "What we will do now is nothing, but watch it. And we'll have regular PSA tests done." The size of the figure, seemingly, was less important than the progression in the figure

Robert - Even during the testing there were no symptoms. I had... well, that's not quite true. I had a PSA, slightly raised PSA. My level of the first PSA was 6.9, half a year later 8 point... a little bit more, half a year later it was 9. So, it was slightly on the increase but nothing sort of really to worry about yet.

Dorothy and Patrick - One of the tests I had done showed that it had gone from 14 to about 22-23. And it shot up to 33 in one three-month period. So again, we had a consultation with the urologist, and he said, "I think we ought to do some more biopsies." They did that again and found that it had now grown probably to about two millimetres, or a little bit more.

Robert - I felt it was nothing. In the end it proved to be something, but at that time I thought, "Ah well, I'm still young. There's nothing wrong with me. I'll go in there." And three days later, I was told the news that two of the samples showed signs of cancer.

Richard - I had all the necessary tests and the biopsy and found that, yes, I had a very low neoplasma - cancer.

Ray - I didn't get really excited about the whole thing because I felt that this was something that obviously could be cured and that I wasn't going to jump up and down. I did ask myself, "Why have I got this?" And I asked the urologist the same question, and he said, "We don't know the reason why." We don't know why it happens, what causes it. And as a result of that, we have no precise cure for it.

Richard - Didn't worry me. I never sat down and cried and thought, "Woe is me."

Robert - I wasn't prepared to be told I had prostate cancer. Because, how did I react? I came out in a sweat, I left the office, sort of was really angry with myself in the corner... "That's not me. It can't be right", you know. So my wife and the doctor took me back into the



office and said, "Look, Bob. Sit down. We'll explain it all. It's not as bad as what you think it is. Yes, it's a shock to be told this, but there's no easy way."

Michael - We went away to Gippsland to a sort of rural retreat for a few days, so that I could kind of calm down.

Dorothy and Patrick - I was shocked, and momentarily I was scared. But my GP said to me, "I think we should send you to a urologist - a specialist who can deal with these sorts of things." So I said, "Right, the sooner the better." And I came home and I told Dorothy about it and she was shocked also I think, and my family. But that's only a momentary thing. There's no need to panic. There are people there to help us.