

Good evening.

My name is Robert Abelson. I am 60 years old. I was diagnosed with Prostate cancer in July of 2007 at the age of 59.

My history with prostate problems prior to the discovery of the tumor was minimal.

Several years ago while checking on other issues, it was determined with an ultra sound that I had an enlarged prostate, and I had been treated for possible Prostatitis, but after a course of antibiotics, the problem disappeared.

I have had my PSA checked for years, not always on an annual basis, but frequently enough that my general practitioner believed that a good history was on record.

In May of 2007 a general physical revealed that PSA had gone from 4.2 in September of 2006 to 5.4. My GP suggested a visit to the urologist.

Dr. Kong, a urologist at Humber River, did a biopsy and in mid-July we received the results: 3 out of 10 cores were positive, and the Gleason score was 7 (3+4).

Dr. Kong told us surgery was available in 6 weeks. After further questioning about options, he agreed to get me a referral to see an oncologist.

I made a further appointment with my GP and asked him to arrange for a second opinion.

As a result, I had appointments with Dr. Schumacher, an oncologist at Sunnybrook, for late August, and Dr. Laurence Klotz, a surgeon also at Sunnybrook about 10 days later.

I knew from my GP that Dr. Klotz was head of Urology at Sunnybrook, but nothing about Dr. Schumacher.

From the time we learned the results of the biopsy, Wendy and I searched the internet looking for what other treatment options existed other than what we knew.

One web site I found very helpful was the Princess Margaret Hospital web site. On top of the information about prostate cancer, I found a link to MAN to MAN.

On the first Tuesday of August, Wendy and I went to 20 Holly Street: She to attend a Side by Side meeting, and I for a Man to Man meeting.

At the Man to Man meeting I told my story, and was assured by the group that my actions to date were good and that the doctors that I had appointments with at Sunnybrook were known and first rate.

I was told to take my partner with me, and to prepare questions ahead of time, and that no question was stupid.

At a Man to Man awareness meeting here at the Botanical Garden we picked up a magazine called Our Voice, which had a feature article on HIFU, an acronym for High Intensity Focused Ultrasound, written by Dr. Klotz.

We saw Dr. Schumacher and she said I was a candidate for a trial of a combination of High Dose Rate Brachytherapy followed by 13 sessions of external beam radiation.

10 days later we met with Dr. Klotz who told us that I qualified for surgery or radiation.

I had to bring up HIFU to Dr. Klotz, so I asked, “What about HIFU?”, and his response was, “What about HIFU?” He told us it was costly, and that from my biopsy I qualified for HIFU, and he gave us information on it and an appointment for 2 weeks later to follow up.

Dr. Klotz performed a TRUS, a Trans-Rectal Ultrasound, to confirm that the size of the prostate was no greater than 50 cc. Mine turned out to be 49CC and I was prescribed Avodart to reduce the prostate further, and I arranged for the HIFU to take place December 9th, 2007.

How did I decide to go ahead with HIFU? Frankly, surgery was the least favoured option available.

Because of my Gleason score being 7 I was not a candidate for seed implants.

The idea of external beam radiation did not sit well with me because of potential, though remote, side issues such as rectal bleeding.

In my studies related to HIFU I found that the success ratio was as good as with any other treatment.

Though HIFU is relatively new, the doctors who practice HIFU are at the top of the scale including Dr. Klotz, head of urology at Sunnybrook, Dr. Barkin, chief of staff of Humber River, as well as Dr. Finelli, Dr. Fleshner, Dr. Radomski, and Dr. Robinette, and that is only at The Can-Am HIFU clinic.

I believed that if a surgeon such as Dr. Klotz tells me I am a candidate, and is willing to take me on, it means something. I also believed that since the Can-Am clinic is only a couple of years old, they would select patients who are more likely to succeed, as with any new procedure they look for success.

Dr. Klotz told me he had done 20 other HIFU procedures, and had only one patient that they had to do a second time.

There are people out there that tell you that HIFU is too new, and they may be right, but I'm certain, there were people out there when radiation became a treatment for prostate cancer that said it was too new as well, and today radiation is a very accepted form of treatment for prostate cancer.

One other major deciding factor, other than it was the least invasive form of treatment that I could have, with potentially the least side affects, was the fact that I learned online that the National Health Service in the U.K. covers the cost of HIFU as a treatment for prostate cancer. That just added to its credibility for me.

Two days prior to the HIFU I stopped eating solid foods, and the day prior I was restricted to consuming only clear liquids.

We arrived at the clinic at 7 am and shortly thereafter I was in the procedure area where I met the anesthesiologist, who administered an epidural to numb me from the waist down, as well as an intravenous sedation and Dr. Klotz.

That is all I know.

I was out.

I was awake by noon, and saw Dr. Klotz who told us he had fried the prostate pretty good. Wendy and my daughter Sharyn got me a sandwich to eat and I had to drink a lot.

At 2:30 we were on our way home, with a supra-pubic catheter which was inserted through the abdomen, a prescription of Cipro, an antibiotic which I started to take the next day, a prescription for Flomax which helps with the urine flow which I started 5 days later, and Cialis which was prescribed for the reason that it encourages earlier recovery of spontaneous natural erections, which I started taking two weeks after the procedure.

The only discomfort I felt after the procedure was from the catheter, which may have moved a little deeper in me during the first week, but was rectified by the nurse at the Can-Am HIFU clinic.

The nurse at the clinic was outstanding, calling daily for the first couple of weeks to check up on me, and answering any questions or concerns no matter how trivial.

The catheter remained with me for almost a month due to the Christmas & New Years holiday and Dr. Klotz not being available until Jan 7. My fears of the catheter were baseless and while I felt extremely liberated once it was removed, it was not the dreaded experience that I had imagined it would be.

I wore a large pad for one day as a precaution, and then a panty liner for about two weeks to contain the occasional dribble.

Running is a hobby of mine, and I went for my first run a couple of days after the removal of the catheter, it was for about 2km.

The cold slippery conditions kept me back from going further.

We saw Dr. Klotz in March and my PSA was 0.28.

When I saw Dr. Klotz in March, I said to him, that I have always been taught, when things appear too good to be true, they may be too good to be true, and I asked for another biopsy.

It was performed yesterday. My latest PSA score is 0.24.

That is my story. Based upon my situation, with my scores, and the Doctor who did the work on me, I can recommend HIFU, but each case is different.

In closing I have two pieces of advice:

1) once you make your decision as to what treatment is best for you, stick with your decision. It was based upon your needs and desires,

and

2) if you have sons or brothers, regardless of their age, make sure that they get PSA tests.

By having a test now, even if they are in their twenties or thirties, they will have set a mark, or score to follow in subsequent tests.

Thank you for listening, and I am happy to discuss my experience with anyone.

August 13, 2008 - UPDATE:

Robert mentioned that he had gone for another biopsy the day before SURVIVOR FORUM III, on July 29, 2008.

We are very happy to report that the result of that biopsy was negative for cancer.

Congratulations Robert!