Newsletter

Cancer Consultants of America

Bridging the Gap Between Cancer and Understanding®

Cancer Answers

Prostate Cancer

During the calendar year, each month is designated for a specific type of cancer awareness. The month of September is designated for multiple cancers, including prostate cancer. Prostate health has entered the cancer awareness conversations within the past two decades primarily due to humans living longer. The success of these cancer awareness campaigns have advanced our medical knowledge of prostate health along with the development of novel procedures to accurately characterize the health of a patient's prostate. Through this improved understanding, the treatments for prostate cancer have become more focused and effective thereby allowing patients to lead a healthy life after their journey with a prostate cancer diagnosis.

Recent efforts to promote prostate cancer awareness have proven to be successful by getting men to visit their doctor and inquire about the status of their prostate health. The prostate gland is about the size of a walnut and is an important part of the male reproductive system. This gland secretes fluids that contribute to the content of semen thus providing nourishment for the sperm cells. These sperm cells carry the paternal genetic information which combines with the maternal genetic information contained within the egg. The result of this fusion is referred to as fertilization and is the beginning stages of human development.

The prostate gland is an active organ with a lot of cellular activity. Given the elevated activity of prostate cells, these cells have the potential to transform into cancer cells. The majority of prostate cancer cases occur within the outer zone (peripheral zone) of the prostate which is located on the posterior side of the gland and situated near the rectum. Accessing the prostate through the anus is a common approach that permits a medical specialist to perform a digital rectal exam. This type of examination allows the specialist to feel for any abnormal growth that could be cancer developing within the peripheral zone of the prostate. Less often, cancer can originate within the inner zone (transition zone) of the prostate. The inner zone of the prostate surrounds the urethra, which is the hollow tube that connects the urinary bladder to the external part of the male reproductive organ. In rare cases, cancer can begin in the central zone of the prostate and is characterized by a more aggressive growth profile when compared to cancers originating in either of the other two zones of the prostate.

If prostate cancer is suspected, a series of diagnostic procedures are available to assess if cancer is present. Minimally invasive diagnostic procedures are commonly performed before any invasive procedures begin. Typically blood tests are carried out in order to analyze the biomarkers within the blood that will provide insight to the health of the prostate. These biomarkers include the PSA, Prostate-Specific Antigen. If the biomarkers come back as abnormal, non-invasive procedures such as ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can provide images for the care team to

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visually assess the health of the prostate. Additionally, more invasive procedures such as a biopsy can be performed. This approach typically involves inserting a needle into the prostate and removing a small portion of the tissue that will be analyzed using a microscope in order to determine the presence or absence of cancer cells. If cancer cells are observed, a Gleeson score is assigned which is used to describe the extent of the cancer development. The Gleeson score has a maximum value of 10 and higher scores are generally more concerning in regard to the health of the prostate. The treatment options depend on many factors that are associated to the cancer, such as the location of the tumor within the prostate, at what stage of development has the cancer been observed at the time of diagnosis, and how aggressively the tumor is developing.

At the present time, prostate cancer has a very favorable survival rate. When the cancer is localized to just the prostate, the 5-year relative survival rate is nearly 100%. In more complicated cases when the cancer has spread to regional tissues and lymph nodes, the 5-year relative survival rate is over 99%. However, this survival rate plummets to approximately 35% when the cancer has spread to distant locations such as the bone and liver.

The month of September is dedicated for prostate cancer awareness. These efforts have successfully encouraged more men to visit their doctor and inquire about their prostate health. In turn, this leads to early detection of prostate cancer. As a result of early detection, the survival rates of prostate cancer have significantly improved over the recent decades.

Submit your **Cancer Answers** topics to info@cancerconsultantsofamerica.com

We Are Available to You

Please contact us today if you would like more information about how our services can benefit you and your family.

Services:

- Individual and Family Cancer Education
- Medical Appointment Liaison Services
- Information Seminars and Public Speaking Events

Fun Facts – September

Cancer Awareness Month:

- Blood Cancer (Red, Orange, Violet, Lime Green, Burgundy)
- Pediatric Cancer (Gold)
- Prostate Cancer (Light Blue)
- Ovarian Cancer (Teal)
- Gynecological Cancer (Purple)
- Thyroid Cancer (Purple, Teal, Pink)

September 5 – International Day of Charity
September 8 – International Literacy Day
September 15 – National Cheeseburger Day
September 19 – National Talk Like a Pirate Day
September 27 – World Tourism Day
September 29 – National Coffee Day

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