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## Prostate Cancer

### As soon as possible!

An 8.30am telephone call from your doctor's receptionist saying my doctor wanted to see me as soon as possible was not calculated to produce serene calm. How would 9.30am be? Could I make it? My first thought was, "Why so soon? What's wrong?" Presenting myself at 9.25am my doctor ushered me into her room and proceeded to tell me that the results of my latest blood test showed an elevated PSA reading continuing a trend that developed over twelve months. The latest showed a larger reading than she had expected.

She did a manual examination of the prostate (yes I know) and found the prostate slightly enlarged but nothing too great. Being concerned with the test results however, she suggested another blood test in three weeks. That test confirmed the previous one.

### A biopsy – then prayer

My doctor suggested I make an appointment with a urologist which I did. The urologist did another manual inspection of my prostate (what joy), studied the blood test results and said that while he did not think there was too much to be concerned about he would like to do a biopsy. The biopsy showed a cancer that was not particularly large but the urologist recommended I consider having it treated and laid out the options – radiation or excision. The alternatives seemed stark but nothing many others hadn't faced, and I had already talked to my GP about possible treatment if the tests showed a significant problem. I was as prepared as I could be in the situation. I had also talked extensively to my wife who was calm and rational about the whole matter and we prayed about it.

This was nearly ten years ago and my decision to have the prostate removed I might not have made today as treatment regimens have improved greatly in the intervening period but more of that in a moment.

I was then sent for a series of tests to determine whether the cancer had spread to my abdomen and pelvis. There was an anxious wait for the results and I was relieved to hear the cancer had not spread.

### Radical prostatectomy via robotics

I had no wish to undergo radiation treatment and decided to go ahead with the radical prostatectomy. I thought the chances of a full recovery that way were better. My specialist used the Da Vinci key hole machine which made seven small incisions through which robot arms and other instruments were inserted. This method was designed to aid quick recovery and minimise the time in hospital.

I regained consciousness in the recovery ward and after about 30 minutes was visited by my specialist. He informed me the operation was successful with the prostate containing what he described as a significant cancer. It was then I was glad I had decided on excision. As there was no evidence the cancer had spread there was a likelihood it was over and done with.

### Uncomfortable recovery

The initial recovery period was far from pleasant. Who enjoys a catheter? Nurses kept checking on various bodily functions in a respectful and sometimes amusing way. What a job!

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I was sent home after three nights with a supply of pads that I had to wear for the next five weeks. I thought at one stage I was never going to be able to give them up. I was doing all the pelvic floor exercises but they did not seem to be making all that much difference. But persistence paid off and there was a distinct and quite rapid improvement in urinary control in week five which gave me confidence to get out and about once more.

### What did I learn?

Knowing what I know now would I do it again? Yes, I would. My PSA count is as close to zero as I could wish. I came better to understand and appreciate a number of things about my life. I was reminded that I am only in control up to a certain point and that in the end it's God who will decide what happens. Not always perhaps, but when He wants me to learn certain things such as a greater humility, the deeper peace that can come through prayer, a greater appreciation for the love my wife has for me through her willingness to sit quietly and patiently by my side, then the whole experience was worthwhile. I saw again the love my son has for me and thanked God for him. And I appreciated once more the love my brothers and sisters have for my wife and for me. I was also reminded of what a wonderful country God has given us to live in: the highest standards of medical care, devoted doctors and nurses and how I should use these advantages to find ways to better serve Him.

### ...and faith

And above all else, to have a stronger faith knowing that no matter what happens all will work out for good.

Sidney James  
(Pseudonym)

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