

Pearse Murray:

In October 2001 I went for my annual check up. I hadn't had a PSA done for about 3 years mainly because I was feeling and looking good. My doctor often referred to me as the poster boy for an aging male. While I didn't have a PSA he always did a digital exam. Everything was great until he did the digital and this time he felt something.

The next thing I knew was at Princess Margaret Hospital having a biopsy; this was in early December 2001. They told me I would know the results in a couple of weeks. By the third week in December I still hadn't heard. I went to Florida; my mind was racing with all sorts of fears.

When I returned I called my doctor – the first thing he said was, “Did you hear?”

“Hear what?” I asked.

Somehow they had misplaced my biopsy report. I didn't find out until January 11th that I had a PSA of 5.06 with a Gleason score of 7 (3+4) involving approximately 60% of the biopsy. And 4 out of 5 cores. Stage III Cancer. Negative results on the left nodule. All of this didn't make much sense to me. I was dazed, confused and scared. I didn't want to die – I had a lot of things I wanted to do.

My doctor set up an appointment with a doctor at Princess Margaret, who checked me out and then read the biopsy report. He indicated I should have surgery immediately, but he couldn't fit it

into his schedule. He suggested another doctor at Credit Valley if I was to have surgery. I wanted a doctor who performed this type of surgery, and not an unknown.

I also wanted a second opinion, so I went to Sunnybrook because I think they also have a good Cancer program and I had heard of this Dr. Morton through a relative. I met Dr. Gerard Morton (I actually saw him twice) – I asked him if there was anything new in trials and would I qualify for them. He mentioned HDR Brachytherapy, which is a temporary Brachytherapy in which the radioactive source (Iridium) stays in the prostate for only a few minutes. As the radiation is given over minutes rather than months, it is called High Dose Radiation. Given on two occasions combined with external beam radiotherapy, it allows a large dose of radiation to be precisely targeted directly to the cancer spot.

How this is done:

12 – 18 tiny plastic tubes are placed into the prostate through which a radiation source will later go. Done under anesthetic and with the help of ultrasound directing the tubes they are inserted through the skin between the scrotum and anus.

A Cystoscope (telescope for looking inside the bladder) is used to check the position of the tubes which are then stitched to the skin.

A catheter is also placed in the bladder. The process takes 3-4-minutes. It is all programmed and the therapist sends the radioactive source along the tubes to treat the prostate cancer

directly and minimize the radiation dose to the surrounding normal organs. This process is repeated a week later.

My procedures took place on April 16th and April 23rd, 2002. They were followed by five weeks of a small dosage of external beam radiation, from May 15th to June 19th, 2002.

I opted for this therapy and I also felt very comfortable with Dr. Morton and had full confidence in him.

Prior to all this, I dropped into the Canadian Cancer Society on Yonge Street and they told me about Man to Man meetings. I went to one and saw Ray who I knew - the men were all very helpful. A friend told me about another man I worked with and he was also very supportive and passed on some books to read. I was still in a daze. As I said I opted for the radiation therapy – the whole experience at the time seemed very surreal to me.

I went for the treatments; I chose not to work for six months so I could avoid any stress. I stayed at home in my garden, walked my dog and read.

Some of the side effects I experienced after the radiation were a burning sensation while urinating and diarrhea or the urge to defecate for a few months. I found taking half a table of quick solving Imodium helped, plus I started to take BioK yogurt with live cultures. It helped my delicate situation too.

I see Dr. Morton every six months for a check up. It has been two years now and my PSA is 0.02. I am back at work; I also go to the gym 4 times a week. I eat healthy and watch what I eat.

A year ago I was diagnosed with type II diabetes – however my blood sugar is normal.

My cholesterol is A-OK.

And my blood pressure is normal.

I feel great.

Thank you.