

THE DIGITAL EXAMINER



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PSA Pete: A Cowpoke's Tale

By Bill Black Poor old Pete! If he'd just been checked, Dr. Digital wouldn't have had to be called in. You might remember old PSA Pete? In case you don't, here's Pete's story and a sad one it turned out to be, too. You see old Pete was a very special cowpoke with a very special job. When PSA Pete got right filled up with hot air, why he stood fully ten feet



tall, Stetson and all, and he'd attend gatherings and conventions and such out your Calgary way to tell the folks --- especially the fellers over forty --- about the necessity of getting that PSA test done, to check for the possibility of prostate cancer. It's a vital test and every man over forty should see his doctor about getting one. But the sad thing is a lot of fellers don't know that they should and that was where PSA Pete would come in. He'd show up at these shindigs and stroll around greeting folks and shaking hands and just generally getting noticed because, let's face it, a ten foot tall plastic cowboy is hard to ignore, even for the busiest among us.

It's the busy ones Pete was trying to reach, you see --- the guys who have a lot to do. And that's most of us, when you think about it, isn't it? Maybe we've heard about prostate cancer and how a PSA test can detect it before it starts to get hold of us, but we're busy. We've got work to go to and families to raise, and it's easy to put things like a visit to our doctor way back on the back burner and call it something we'll get around to when we get the time. Pete was pretty good at getting folks to see that, however busy they are, men over forty really shouldn't delay getting that PSA test because it doesn't take but a few minutes, and, believe me, it can save your life

Anyway, all this running around kept Pete

pretty busy. He'd no sooner pump himself up for one thing, taking an afternoon to spread his PSA test message around, then he was floating off to something else, meeting and greeting and generally being the ten foot tall cowboy we'd all grown to know and love. His message --- that the PSA test was a life saver --- seemed to register with the folks in Calgary, and, indeed, all around the country people were beginning to talk about this big cowboy who seemed to be full of hot air but really did have an important message to tell. Well, there's nothing wrong with being busy, and Pete was certainly getting busy. Unfortunately, he was so busy he overlooked one fundamental thing. He never got tested himself. He got careless. He'd rush around attending this and showing up at that, and, when he got home, he was absolutely deflated. He'd just let out a big sigh --- more like a whoosh, really --- and fold himself up on the floor and stay completely flat until the next time he had to get pumped up. That's sort of the way life can be for ten-foot tall plastic cowboys.

Anyway, it was during this down time of his, when he wasn't paying attention and was just letting things go, that the disease got a chance to take hold. Oh, in his case it wasn't prostate cancer. It's been clinically proven that plastic cowboys full of hot air tend not to have prostates. Valves, maybe, but not prostates. No, in Pete's case, the disease was mould, and mould, for a plastic guy, can be just as deadly as prostate cancer can be for a regular guy. Well, sad to say, one morning Pete was getting pumped up as usual for something or other and the mould was discovered. Unfortunately, because he hadn't checked, the mould had progressed to a point where there was nothing his operators could do. PSA Pete, the ten-foot tall plastic cowboy, had gone to the last roundup. If he'd only followed his own ad-

Our next support
group meeting is on
Tuesday,
March 11th

Our meetings start
at 7:30 PM and are
held in the auditor-
ium at Foothills
Hospital.

Visiting from Ed-
monton will be
Dr. Michael Hobart,
who will describe the
use of the Da Vinci
Robot for prostate
surgery



Prostaid Calgary meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:30 PM

vice and gotten a timely test, it might all have been avoided. But he was just too busy. Sad, isn't it?

Well, if you're in the Calgary area, you might watch out for a new chap on his rounds. Come this April you'll see Dr. Digital making his first house calls out that way, and, for you and the rest of us across the country, his message is the same as poor old PSA Pete's: **Get that PSA Test. It could save your life.**



Cancer Experts: Don't Look To Supplements For Cancer Protection

Experts at the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) said that whole foods, and not dietary supplements, play a role in lowering cancer risk. Citing a huge and comprehensive AICR report on cancer prevention, the panel of experts cautioned against relying on pills and powders as a means of protection.

"When the panel examined the accumulated evidence from almost 50 different supplement trials, cohort studies and case-control studies, the results were simply too inconsistent to justify using supplements to protect against cancer," said AICR Nutrition Advisor Karen Collins, MS, RD

Under certain conditions, some high-dose supplements seemed protective at specific doses, some did nothing, and some actually increased the risk of cancer. In contrast, the research was much more consistent when the AICR expert panel examined over 440 studies on cancer risk and foods that contained specific vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. These widely different results led them to conclude: "Dietary supplements are not recommended for cancer prevention."

Collins noted, however, that in the AICR Expert Report, *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective*, the panel explicitly states that supplements can have a place in a healthy diet. Certain groups - such as women of child-bearing age - may even receive health benefits from taking controlled doses of specific dietary supplements. But according to the report, lower risk of cancer should not be considered one of those benefits.

"Let's be clear: although some people have misread the recommendation as simply, 'Don't take supplements ever,' that's not what the expert panel concluded," said Collins. "The panel members were careful to make an important distinction, namely: Don't rely on supplements to protect you from cancer."

Different Grades for Different Cancer Links

When the AICR expert panel reviewed the accumulated data from supplement studies, they noted that much of the research showing high-dose dietary supplements influencing cancer risk was conducted among people who were already at high risk for cancer. That means the results from these studies may or may not extend to the rest of the population. The panel concluded that there is no way to reliably predict the risks and benefits that widespread use of such supplements could produce, and the potential for unexpected and unfavorable side effects is real.

Certain supplements have indeed been shown to increase the risk of cancer among specific high-risk groups. The evidence that beta-carotene supplements cause lung cancer in current smokers is convincing, according to the AICR report.

(A judgment of convincing was the most exacting "grade" the AICR expert panel assigned to various links between diet and cancer; the next strongest links earned a grade of probable. Other grades included limited, but suggestive; limited, but no conclusion possible and finally substantial effect on risk unlikely.)

Of all the supplements reviewed by the panel, only two seemed to have a potential role in protection, and even then the research was less than clear. According to the panel, selenium probably protects against prostate cancer, while calcium probably protects against colorectal cancer. Yet they also concluded that high calcium consumption probably increases risk for prostate cancer.

Whole Foods vs. Supplements

The data on prevention are considerably more consistent, however, when it comes to foods that contain many of the same vitamins, minerals and other substances that are often sold in supplement form. The panel judged the evidence on several categories of such foods as protective against a variety of cancers, including:

- Foods containing folate are probably protective against pancreatic cancer
- Foods containing carotenoids are probably protective against cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and lung.
- Foods containing beta-carotene are probably protective against esophageal cancer.
- Foods containing lycopene are probably protective against prostate cancer.
- Foods containing vitamin C are probably protective against esophageal cancer.
- Foods containing selenium are probably protective against prostate cancer.

The panel also concluded that other categories of plant foods - including non-starchy vegetables, allium vegetables (onions, leeks, etc.), garlic and fruits in general are probably protective against seven different kinds of cancer.

Exactly why this is so remains unclear - perhaps other substances in whole foods actually provide the cancer protection; perhaps the substances in question interact in unknown synergistic ways to reduce risk, or perhaps diets high in these foods simply tend to be lower in foods linked to increased risk, such as red and processed meat. But the bottom line remains: diets high in plant foods are associated with greater protection against many different kinds of cancer.

The AICR report collectively examined over 7,000 studies on all aspects of diet, physical activity, weight and cancer risk, Collins said. "When you compare the evidence on whole foods to the evidence on supplements, there's simply no contest," said AICR's Collins. "It's clear that choosing nutrient-rich whole foods and drinks is preferable to loading up on dietary supplements."

The panel noted, however, that if low-dose dietary supplements are used to supplement (and not replace) healthy diets, they may offer some health benefits in other regards. Some examples include vitamin B12 (for people over 50 who have difficulty absorbing natural B12), folic acid (for women who may become or who are pregnant) and vitamin D (for people who are not exposed to sufficient sunlight or who do not synthesize adequate amounts from sunlight.) A doctor or nutritionist may make more specific recommendations in accordance with an individual's nutritional needs.

Testosterone seen unrelated to prostate cancer risk

LONDON (Reuters) - Natural levels of a man's testosterone do not affect his prostate cancer risk as some had thought, a finding that should spur scientists to rethink their approach to the disease, researchers said on Tuesday.

Nearly two dozen studies have examined a potential link between testosterone and prostate cancer risk but so far results have been inconclusive, said Andrew Roddam, an epidemiologist at the University of Oxford who led the study.

Writing in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Roddam and colleagues said they found no such relationship after collecting worldwide data on hormone levels of 3,886 men who eventually developed prostate cancer and 6,438 men who did not.

Prostate cancer, which usually occurs in older men, is the second most common cause of cancer death among men after lung cancer. The prostate is a walnut-sized gland that makes fluid for semen.

"We looked at blood samples of men before they had cancer and men who didn't develop cancer to see if their hormone levels were different," Roddam said in a telephone interview.

"When you compare these two groups there is no substantial relationship between hormone levels and their risk of developing the disease."

Testosterone is the primary "male" hormone that helps maintain muscle mass and strength, fat distribution, bone mass, sperm production, sex drive and potency. Women have testosterone too, but at lower levels.

The hormone's role in men's health is controversial, with the relationship between men's natural testosterone levels and overall health not well understood, researchers say.

The reason scientists had believed it played a role in raising prostate cancer risk was because testosterone makes a tumor grow, and which is why some treatments seek to block the hormone.

A study last year also showed that higher naturally occurring levels of testosterone appeared to protect men from fatal heart attacks or strokes and death from several causes.

The latest findings, however, should prod researchers to shift the focus of their research into new risk factors for the disease, Paul Godley and colleagues at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill said in a commentary.

"The study obliges the scientific community to move past a seductive, clinically relevant, and biologically plausible hypothesis and get on with the difficult task of exploring, analyzing, and characterizing modifiable risk factors for prostate cancer," they wrote.

Prostaid Website features new treatment video.

The Vancouver Island Prostate Cancer Research Foundation has produced a 28 minute video detailing treatment options. To view, visit www.prostaid.org and click on the button show here. This award winning video has helped many men and their families deal with the question of what treatment to consider. **Our website is constantly being updated. Check back often!**





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Prostaid Calgary Warriors

The Prostaid Calgary Warriors are a caring and compassionate group, well organized and full of information for those men and their families dealing with advanced prostate cancer. The Warriors serve the very important needs of hormone refractory Prostaid Calgary members and all those who have an interest in management of advanced prostate cancer. The Prostaid Calgary Warriors meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:14 pm prior to the main Prostaid Calgary meeting. Warriors meet just outside the auditorium at Foothills Hospital in room #AGW2. Signs will be posted.

Men with advanced prostate cancer, their partners and family members are most welcome to attend. **You will be made welcome!**

For more information call Fred McHenry at (403) 282.3920

Volunteers are urgently needed for mall displays, car shows, parades, and other community events. All we are asking is for a few hours of your time. Prostaid offers an honourarium to cover out-of-pocket expenses. Please call or email Don Jacques or Bob Shiell to help!

Many thanks to our many friends and supporters!

Prostaid has many generous individuals and companies who support our community work. On behalf of our 800+ members, thank you for your generosity. We look forward to continuing our good work in 2008! We have many exciting projects planned for the future!

Newsletter * General Meetings * Hospital Visits * One-On-One visits * Speakers * Website

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