

Prostate Cancer Headlines Reveal Pentagon Secrets and Baseballer Grand Slams

Prostate cancer cases make national news and highlight a “broader silence around the disease.”

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Are public figures obligated to share details about their personal health? Earlier this year, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held a press conference to apologize for being secretive about his prostate cancer diagnosis and the hospitalization that resulted from complications while treating the disease. Luckily—given the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East—there were no gaps in the chain of command at the Defense Department, and Austin soon returned to his post.

“I did not handle this right. I should have told the president about my cancer diagnosis. I should have also told my team and the American public, and I take full responsibility,” Austin said, adding: “I’m here with a clear message to other men, especially older men. Get screened. Get your regular checkups.”

As the Washington Post noted, Austin’s incident “spotlights a broader silence around the disease” and was a “missed opportunity for the Pentagon chief to lead and spread awareness.”

About one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime, and it’s the second leading cause of cancer death among U.S. men, after lung cancer, according to the American Cancer Society. The risk is higher for Black men, a fact underscored in January when Martin Luther King Jr.’s youngest son, Dexter, died of prostate cancer at age 62.

Early screening and detection can mean more treatment options and better outcomes. Public awareness can also fight stigma, so it’s welcome news when men go public with their diagnoses, such as Representative Glenn Thompson (R-Pa.), whose cancer was found during tests following a routine physical exam. And you could say Baseball Hall of Famer Ryne Sandberg, formerly a Chicago Cubs second baseman, hit a grand slam when he shared news of his metastatic prostate cancer on Instagram, including pics during treatment.
