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Day 4,315 – A Week After Salvage Radiation Therapy Ended

Taking stock and sharing concerns after I completed SRT for my prostate cancer

September 19, 2022 By Daniel Zeller

If you recall my last update, I was all abuzz with energy on my first day after salvage radiation therapy ended. Well, that didn't last long.

Sunday and Monday I was pretty much knocked out with fatigue, and Tuesday wasn't much better. The rest of the week saw slight improvements with each passing day, but you would have still found me taking a cat nap here or there.

The urinary frequency is still there, meaning I'm still running to the toilet four to six times a night which is annoying. But there has been another change, and I'm not sure if it's a result of the radiation, the Flomax (tamsulosin), or a combination of both.

Post-surgery, pre-radiation, I would get the urge to empty my bladder and I'd have time to make it to the toilet and then consciously start the flow to empty my bladder. Since the radiation, the time between my brain receiving the urge to empty my bladder and the time I need to be at the toilet is much shorter. It also seems that my ability to control the start of the flow is lessened to a degree, meaning it starts flowing on its own. That's led to one minor accident where I was just a few seconds shy of getting to the toilet.

I'm not overly concerned about this at the moment, as it's still early after the radiation ended. Plus, it may be the Flomax that's contributing to this as well, and the radiation oncologist said it would be acceptable to stop taking it around the end of September if I felt it wasn't helping me with the urinary frequency. However, if it continues beyond that, I may have to get one of those "Where's the toilet?" apps for my phone.

This morning, I was surprised by blood on the toilet paper after my morning constitutional. I'm pretty sure it's from irritated hemorrhoids rather than from something deeper inside. It's something to keep an eye on going forward.

You may recall that, back in June about five weeks after I received my Eligard injection, I was noticing a dull musculoskeletal ache in the middle of my back. Through the summer, that stayed pretty consistent—just a minor ache in the background not causing any issues. It was tolerable and I didn’t think much of it. In the last few weeks, that’s changed.

The ache is more intense and a bit more widespread across my back than when it first appeared. Plus, I can have brief shots of acute pain if I move suddenly or twist my body in a weird way (like after unexpectedly bumping into something). It’s more like a muscle spasm response than anything else. But it can and does impact how the way I walk (a little more gingerly) and how I stand up.

Of course, hormone therapy is known to contribute to musculoskeletal issues, and one of the listed side effects of Flomax is “body aches.” Perhaps they’re additive.

Of course, my mind also has to go down the path of possible distant metastases to the spine or ribs even though it’s extraordinarily unlikely given where my PSA was at going into SRT (0.36 ng/ml). Still, it’s a conversation that I’m going to have with my urologist in my meeting on 20 September.

Stay tuned for more to come.

Be well!

Image: Salton Sea, California

This post originally appeared on Dan’s Journey Through Prostate Cancer on September 3, 2022. It is republished with permission.
