Life After Radical Prostatectomy: 8.5 Years Later

My shift in thinking of this as more of a chronic illness has really been helpful.

July 11, 2019 By Dan Zeller

So it's been 8.5 years since my radical prostatectomy on 4 January 2011. How am I doing?

Status
My PSA dropped from 0.13 ng/ml to 0.10 ng/ml at the last test back in March, which was quite the pleasant surprise. That's more in line with three tests prior to the 0.13 test, so perhaps the 0.13 was the anomaly. In any case, we agreed to test in six months instead of the four month cycle that I had been on, and I'm okay with that. Two extra months of not worrying about PSA is a good thing.

Emotions
There isn't a day that goes by where cancer doesn't pop into my mind at least tangentially. The good news is that with such a slow upward trend in my PSA (PSA Doubling Time of 155 months or so), I've been able to shift my thinking to managing this more as a chronic illness than something to panic over. That's been emotionally liberating. Of course, I may be playing with fire and my test in October will snap me out of that mindset.

Incontinence/Urinary Control
There really hasn't been much change in this area. Still the occasional stress incontinence squirt and the post-pee dribble if I don't go through my routine to drain my urethra. I'll stick a pad in my underwear if I know I'm going to be more physically active, as that tends to cause a few leaks as well. On the whole, it's more a nuisance than a real quality of life problem.

One of the good things is that I rarely have to get up in the middle of the night to empty my bladder, which means that I can sleep through the night. Mind you, though, that I need to get better at getting more than 6-7 hours of sleep per night, and that may change the equation a little.

There are times during the day, though, where I can have a sudden need to urinate right now, even though my bladder is far from its capacity. It's an occasional thing, fortunately, and I've always been able to make it to a toilet in time.

Sexual Function
This is one area where I seem to be regressing a little. Erections aren't as strong as they used to

be; now they’re in the 60%-75% range. Again, that’s without chemical assistance. I may talk with the doctor about this the next visit.

Summary
My shift in thinking of this as more of a chronic illness has really been helpful. The stress and worry aren’t nearly at the levels that they once were, so that’s good. But that lasts only until the next PSA test, and then we take the latest factoid and go from there.

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