Life After Radical Prostatectomy: 96 Months Later

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January 4, 2019 By Dan Zeller

So it's been 96 months since my radical prostatectomy on 4 January 2011. How am I doing?

Status

My PSA resumed its upward climb last month after a brief hiatus between April and August. It certainly wasn't unexpected, yet I was holding out hope that I could have had three consecutive PSA readings at the same level. It just wasn't meant to be. That means that I'm one step closer to having to make a decision about what's next.

Emotions

At this point, I'm at peace with where I'm at regarding the cancer returning. What's actually been gnawing at me since my last post like this six months ago is something completely different—relationships.

Relationships require effort and commitment by both parties and lately, I've been asking myself the question, "At what point does one stop investing in a relationship when you get little or no return?" I don't know that I have the answer to that question. I don't want to burn bridges, but time is the most precious thing we as cancer patients have, and we want to invest our time as wisely as possible.

The sad thing is that I'm beginning to ask that question of the people who are the ones that I'll need to turn when the cancer advances to the point where I'll need assistance. (Remember, I'm single and the thought of facing this alone scares the piss out of me.)

Incontinence

Speaking of piss out of me, let's talk incontinence. (Sorry, I couldn't resist.) I have noticed a slight increase in stress incontinence episodes and, if I'm perfectly honest with myself, I would attribute that to the fact that I have gained weight again. I really think there's a correlation there, so I'm going to work on losing some weight and see what happens.

I’m still 90+% dry, but when I sneeze, cough, or lift something of even moderate weight, the likelihood of a few drops leaking out has gone up slightly.

The other time that I have issues is immediately after emptying my bladder. (I don’t know why I haven’t talked about this before, but it’s been an issue for quite a while.) If I don’t go through a little routine at the urinal to “milk” any residual urine from my urethra after emptying my bladder, the chances are good that I may have a squirt of urine as I’m putting everything away.

Sexual Function

My ability to achieve decent erections has remained pretty constant through the last six months. I’m in the 70%-85% range now. Good enough to achieve an orgasm, but questionable for much more than that. Some days I can get lucky and get in the 90% erection stage, but those days aren’t common. Of course, all of that is without any chemical assistance.

Summary

I’ve got a lot on my plate in the months ahead. I’ll continue to research imaging trials and salvage radiation in anticipation of my next PSA test in April. I’ll also evaluate my relationships, looking inward first to see how much of this may be my problem, to see where I should invest my precious time. I have no doubt that 2019 will prove to be an interesting year.

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