Zapping: The Final Week

As I finish up radiation therapy for my prostate cancer, I've learned a thing or two about full bladders and fatigue.

September 5, 2022 By Dan Zeller

Last weekend, I ran out to Cabrillo National Monument where I used to volunteer, just to hang out and chat with some of the volunteers there. It was a great visit and I felt quite energized while I was there. But then I discovered something.

There definitely is benefit in forcing yourself to get out and enjoy a lunch with a friend, a walk along the beach, or just a drive through the country. It is energizing while I'm doing it. But what I've noticed is that the fatigue kicks in much harder and much faster than if I'm just hanging out at home.

I could tell near the end of my conversation with my fellow volunteer that the fatigue was coming on fast, and that it was time to go home. When I got home, I was out for the count for a couple of hours after. Not fun.

Monday's zapping session was dicey. I started drinking my liter of water at 8:30 a.m. and finished it at 9:05 a.m., well in advance of my 9:45 a.m. appointment. As I was leaving the house at 9:30 a.m., I felt pretty good about my bladder fullness, but once I got to the clinic, that feeling of fullness subsided substantially. I told the technician that I thought I was borderline and we agreed to take another patient ahead of me. "It will take about ten minutes." Famous last words.

Long story, short, it was nearly half an hour later when they put me on the table, and by this point I was ready to burst. They even put an absorbent pad on the table and a plastic urinal bottle on the counter "just in case." Fortunately, neither were needed, the session was completed successfully, and there was no accident.

Word of advice to those managing their bladder fullness timing: Allow a cushion for delays.

When I got home, I was totally spent and spent the entire day in various stages of rest. Ditto for Tuesday. (Hence my Wile E. Coyote post!) Wednesday went as planned, although I was at about 60%-70% bladder fullness.

Thursday's session went a bit awry. It actually started around 2 a.m. Thursday when I made one of my five runs to the toilet. After crawling back into bed, I just could not fall asleep again. Too many things running through my pea-sized brain kept me awake. I finally dozed off around 4:30 a.m.

Ugh.

When I got up, I wanted to avoid a repeat of Wednesday, so I started drinking water as soon as I got out of bed around 7 a.m., and I started drinking my liter of water a full thirty minutes earlier than I normally start. When I got to the facility, I could tell I wasn't ready, so we skipped me and brought another patient in. Fortunately, that was only about a fifteen minute delay which filled my bladder nicely.

I met with the radiation oncologist after the session Thursday, and we talked about the fatigue and urinary frequency. He said that the fatigue will likely last for about two more weeks after the end of the treatment and then I should see a noticeable improvement. He recommended that I stay on the Flowmax through the end of September to help with the frequency. We'll schedule a follow-up session for three months from the end of treatment, so I'm guessing late November or early December.

Barring any technical issues, tomorrow morning's session will be my last. Woo-hoo! I'll post about that separately.

Be well!

This post originally appeared on Dan's Journey Through Prostate Cancer on August 25, 2022. It is republished with permission.

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