Cancer Health™

# Zapping Session #30 — Week Update

It’s funny how fatigue can come on so suddenly—just one of the side effects from my prostate cancer treatment.

September 1, 2022 By Daniel Zeller

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Week six of seven is done! Woo-hoo! I am soooo ready for this to be over.

Last weekend, I got out of the house for a bit just for a change of scenery, but those excursions were short-lived because the fatigue was kicking in. I stopped by Silver Strand State Beach to just hang out by the ocean and let the sound of the surf be a calming influence. But after only twenty minutes, a wave of fatigue came over me and I could barely keep my eyes open, so I went home. It’s funny how it can come on so suddenly.

Monday’s session went well, and Tuesday I could tell that my bladder wasn’t quite where it needed to be, so we let another patient go ahead of me. At the end of the session, the technician commented it was worth the wait because my bladder was “perfect.”

One thing that popped up for the first time on Tuesday morning was that I noticed a small amount of blood on the toilet paper after my bowel movement. Needless to say, that concerned me considerably. I had a second bowel movement and there was no blood evident then.

I spoke with the nurse after my zapping session and she said that it’s not out of the ordinary this to happen for being at this point in the treatment. I mentioned that I have had a history of hemorrhoids that would bleed on occasion, and she said the radiation could irritate them, too. She encouraged me to make sure that my stool was soft, either through diet or stool-softeners. There hasn’t been a repeat occurrence since.

Wednesday’s session was weird. I went in feeling as though my bladder was full and after the treatment, the technician said it was barely into the treatable category and encouraged me to start drinking earlier. That frustrated me because I’ve been hydrating before going to bed, drinking a bit each time I go to the toilet (six times the night before!—so much for the Flomax working), and even starting to drink when I first wake up. Grrr.

Thursday’s session went well, cutting it almost a tad too close with bladder. Afterwards, I met with the radiation oncologist (RO) who just flew in from his vacation in Bavaria the night before.

We talked about my fatigue and how the Flomax doesn’t seem to be doing much of anything positive for me yet (it can take a week to kick in). We’ll keep an eye on things this week and beyond, although he said that the urinary issues could continue for a month or so after treatment ends.

It was interesting that, without prompting, he mentioned that it's really the last few sessions that really do the most damage to the cancer cells and it's not wise to stop early. I'm guessing that there are those who are tired of the side effects, as I am, who ask to cut the treatment short. Not me. I've come this far, I'll finish it off.

We also talked about the follow-up plan once treatment is ended. In a nutshell, he'll see me again in three months, near the end of November and review my PSA and if there are any lingering side effects. He agreed that these first few PSA tests will reflect the effects of the androgen deprivation therapy far more so than they will the results of the salvage radiation. He said it will be a year or more before we really know if the radiation was successful. Not a surprise to me, but nice to have it confirmed.

Even though I've started drinking my water earlier than I have been, I could tell that my bladder wasn't ready for this morning's session, so we let another patient go ahead of me while my bladder filled. No biggie. If I had another five minutes on the table, I would have fallen asleep. (Thanks, fatigue!)

Time for a nap.

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