

## Protons - A Prostate Cancer Treatment/Cure.

In 2013, I received a call from my urologist who informed me, “You have Prostate Cancer and you’ll need to come in to see me.” Those frightening words would lead to an intense month long search as to what was the best approach for me to deal with this disease.

Through a friend, I was introduced to a book, “You Can Beat Prostate Cancer and You Don’t Need Surgery to Do It” by Robert J. Marckini. Marckini is himself a prostate cancer survivor who attributes his successful outcome to his proton radiation treatment at Loma Linda University Medical Center. In his book, Marckini, a retired engineer, provides a layman’s overview of prostate cancer and its various treatment modalities, with special emphasis on the use of proton radiation for eradicating that form of cancer. I read the book from cover to cover. It sounded almost too good to be true, as to the likelihood of a successful outcome after treatment and the ease of the actual treatment itself.

When I met with my urologist, he explained that my Gleason 7 (3+4) cancer score from the biopsy of my prostate, meant that I was not a candidate for watchful waiting, where the cancer is just monitored to see if it becomes more aggressive which then requires medical intervention. In my doc’s view, surgery was the “Gold Standard” approach to rid my body of the cancer. The down side of that approach was it was a surgery which caused incontinence and impotence in the short term but in the hands of a skilled surgeon like him, the likelihood was that I could look forward to a complete recovery, of course - no promises.

However, since my cancer was still at a relatively early stage, he advised that he would be comfortable recommending as an alternative to surgery that I undergo 45 sessions of X-ray radiation. When I raised my layman’s fears of radiation sickness, loss of hair, and possibility of radiation induced secondary cancers, he informed me that the modern radiation technique normally avoided those problems which had been the case in the past. I also asked for his view on proton radiation which he poo-poo’d as still an experimental form of treatment, which had yet to show itself any better than external beam radiation. On top of that, in 2013 in order to get proton treatment, you had to go to California, Texas, or Florida at great expense to yourself, even if your insurance carrier would pay for the treatment. I had been a patient of this urologist at that time for 20 years and respected his opinions so my first inclination was to follow his advice.

Subsequent to my meeting with my urologist, I received a packet of information from Loma Linda Medical Center which detailed their proton program for treating prostate cancer. The packet included a list of over 50 men who had

been through the Loma Linda prostate cancer treatment and were willing to speak with any new candidate considering that method of treatment. So I started calling these strangers, each of whom turned out to be so totally up front as to their experiences that I could hardly believe what they were saying. In short, there was nary a negative word spoken as to the actual treatment experience from any of them, and each just raved about the staff. On top of that there was uniform praise as to the life style program while a patient that, to a man, they called it a "radiation vacation." They explained that the Patient Services Director, arranged for education programs once a week dealing with the various aspects of cancer. Each patient had a complimentary membership at the University Health Club stocked with every piece of athletic equipment known to man, as well as golfing outings, if one was of a mind for that activity. Additionally, to foster camaraderie among the patients, there was a weekly pot luck dinner and a separate upscale dining out opportunity at local restaurants.

But most importantly, the use of protons, which are the nuclei of a hydrogen atom, can be focused on the prostate cancer and its surrounding tissue with such accuracy to ensure the destruction of the tumor and any immediately adjacent cancer cells. Also the radiation beam terminates on the tumor under what is known as the Bragg Peak concept so that there is no exit radiation from the body as is the case with normal X-ray therapy. All of this is accomplished without any discomfort to the patient during the daily, one minute exposure to the radiation. While there were occasional incidents of radiation side effects, the vast majority of men breezed through the 45 day course of treatment without any side effects. Likewise, was the absence of any after effects being reported by the men I contacted, and now I can add my voice to having nothing to report in that regard. My PSA has been undetectable since I left Loma Linda.

As you can imagine, given the above history, I didn't follow my urologist's advice but instead signed up for the Loma Linda program. In the ten years since my treatment, I understand that they now accomplish the course of treatment in 25 sessions rather than the old 45 I underwent. There have been other advancements such as developing a better protection from radiation for the rectum which sits next to the prostate so that they no longer use a sterile water balloon which used to be inserted into the rectum for that protection. Even that wasn't so terrible when I went through it. And now you can receive this proton treatment at Mayo Hospital in Phoenix.

If you are a candidate for proton radiation, it is something based on my own experience that I can recommend to you. However, you should do your own due diligence not only into the current proton treatment protocol, but other newly developed approaches to ridding your body of this disease. Good Luck for your future. Richard Mesh, HRMesh@aol.com. for further contact.