

On the 12th April 2016, I was diagnosed with Cancer – **Prostate cancer**. This was devastating to myself and my family as my symptoms were not consistent with cancer. This is my story.

DIAGNOSIS

My urine flow had slowed a bit and recently I had begun to do the regular 1am trek to the bathroom. **Something I had put down to “getting old”**.

My doctor did a blood test and my PSA result had risen to 2.5 for someone aged 50, a PSA below 4.0 does not normally raise any alarms bells...

However, as my father was diagnosed at age 65, my doctor suggested a few more tests. An enlarged prostate was detected and a further Biopsy test indicated medium level Cancer.

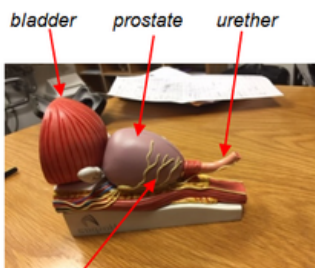
Our life went into meltdown and I vividly recall crying constantly with my wife Kym for a couple of weeks. Telling my children Jack (18), Max (15) and Chloe (13) was traumatic as just the word “cancer” raised concerns to them – and me. There is no text book to advise how best to break that news to your children. More crying ensued.

Being so passionate about the insurance industry, I made sure I was more than adequately covered in case an event like this were to occur.

This was a life changer.

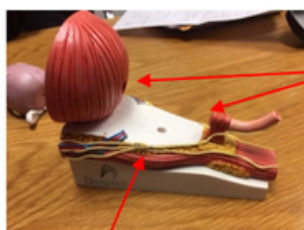
TREATMENT

I was referred to Dr John Yaxley, *Urologist (Wesley Medical Centre)*. He provided the options to Kym and I, and as the MRI showed a dark shadow close to the margin (edge of the prostate), he recommended the **Nerve Sparing Radical Prostatectomy**.



yellow lines are the nerves that surround the prostate - controlling incontinence and erections.

post surgery - prostate removed



once prostate is removed, urether is reconnected to bladder. Catheter inserted whilst stitches heal.

important to ensure nerves are not cut or damaged

A Prostatectomy is major surgery taking up to 4 hours and is the most invasive option, and it also has the most profound immediate potential side effects – incontinence and erectile dysfunction.

The Prostatectomy can be performed in 2 ways, robotically or the traditional open surgery. Both styles have similar long term recovery patterns, however it is in the short term where the Robotic surgery appears superior – but significantly more expensive.

Amazingly, the surgeon sits at a computer with controllers like an X-Box with a screen as shown below.



With these controllers, the surgeon controls what is happening with the “robot” above the patient.

My full trauma benefits were paid within 2 weeks of lodging the claim form, and having these funds available quickly removed a lot of stress from our lives.

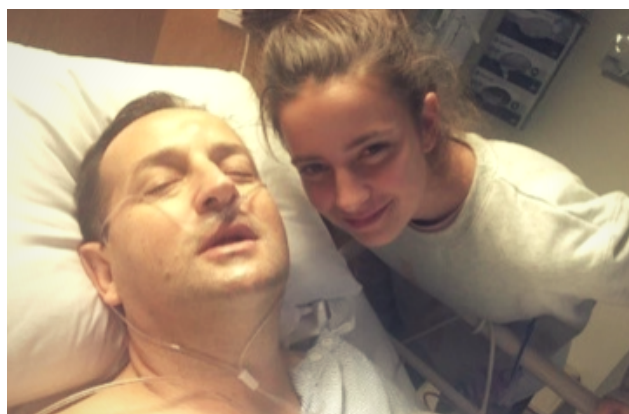
I could take up Dr Yaxley's recommendation and get the best possible robotic surgery – as well as take 7 weeks off work to fully recover.

I had choices. We had choices.

The surgery was on 30 May 2016 and took 4 hours.

I was wheeled up to the ward where Kym and my daughter, Chloe were waiting.

Despite losing 22 kilos since Feb 2016, my face and body were so bloated it looked like I had put all the weight back on – and some!



I was off with the pixies which Chloe found quite amusing.

RECOVERY

I woke up after the surgery with a catheter inserted in my penis and unfortunately, when released from hospital 2 days after the surgery the catheter stayed with me – for a week.

Sleeping was impossible as you could only lie on your back, socialising was non-existent. Leaving the house with a urine bag strapped to my leg under my pants was avoided.

Following the removal of the catheter, I thought life would be better. However, this was not to be – and I did enter some dark times.

For the next couple of weeks, my pelvic floor muscles did not perform as well as I had expected.

I could not control my bladder and it really did start to get me down. I went through many boxes of mens pads in those 2 weeks and thought if this was my life going forward, *it was not going to be pleasant.*

Fortunately, the pelvic floor muscles began to improve after those 2 weeks.

I can fully understand why research suggested that 70% of Australian men indicated their lifestyle deteriorated after diagnosis.

The other major source of angst for me (and all other sufferers) was to find out if I could still function as a “man”.

I was referred to Dr Michael Gillman, a men’s health doctor who specialises in male sexual health. He was excellent, calming, a great source of information and supplied me with the first “port of call” to test if I could function correctly.

This involved many scripts for medications – Viagra and Cialis. I was very pleased to say these proved successful.

Slowly but surely progress was being made.



A good support network is vital

My wife Kym was fantastic. She was by my side the whole journey with encouragement. Whilst we cried a lot together, she remained positive and made sure I did the same.

LIFE TODAY

Another milestone was achieved on 20 July 2016.

A new blood test indicated my PSA result had reduced to .009.

Dr Yaxley confirmed this signified the cancer was fully contained in the Prostate when it was removed, and at this time, I would not be required to undertake any further treatment like chemotherapy.

Fantastic news!

I will have a blood test every 4 months for the next year. This will monitor my PSA levels. So every 4 months, I will be looking over my shoulder – just hoping the results come back all clear.

THE FACTS

- Approximately **18,700** men are diagnosed with prostate cancer each year;
- Close to **3,000** men die of prostate cancer each year;
- In a room of 100 men in their 50's, Only **1 or 2** would have prostate cancer;
- A man with prostate cancer in his 50's is **80%** more likely to die from the disease than any other cause in the first 10 years;
- Incontinence can take up to **12 months** to resolve after surgery;
- 12 months following surgery, only **40-50%** of men return to pre-surgery erection functioning;
- Orgasm after surgery is 'dry'.

In the meantime, I feel very fortunate my doctor pressed for further tests and I was diagnosed early.

And having one of the best surgeons was a blessing.

I always believed in what I did for our claimants, but to experience this myself really reinforced the value of having appropriate protection strategies in place.

The Trauma insurance payment changed my life. It changed our lives as a family.

Taking into account all the tests, procedures and main surgery, the total costs were close to \$65,000.

Top private health cover and medicare rebated just over half of the costs – so there was still a significant cost to get the best possible medical treatment.

I was able to pay out the mortgage as well as the business loan, plus we had some funds left over to invest – just in case this “thing” comes back, I would certainly want my family to be looked after.

TROY'S ADVICE

Every male over the age of 40 should get a PSA and DRE performed. For a couple of minutes of discomfort, it could save your life.

If you are diagnosed, then the pelvic floor exercises are a must. You should set aside 1 hour a day prior to your operation. Every day. This will help you considerably.

Talk, talk, talk! The best way to beat the dark times is to have a good support network, talk through your concerns, ask plenty of questions.

And finally, be prepared. Make sure you have adequate trauma cover and income protection cover in place – just in case something similar happens to you.

TROY EDMONDSON



Business & Estate
Planning Specialists

Adviser/Survivor
M: 0412 271 087
troy@beps.net.au
www.beps.net.au