

Patient Case Study (16) Bob Hooper



Bob Hooper now finds that his prostate cancer no longer leaves him feeling prostrate!

Bob Hooper spent most of his working life in the Government Information Service, rising up through the ranks to finish as head of corporate communications at the Inland Revenue.

His civil service career included publicity and media relations jobs in a number of different government departments including a spell as chief press officer at the Ministry of Defence. "The big one I missed out on was Health," he says. "Knowing people who understand the tax system inside out isn't much help when you get diagnosed with cancer!"

"I guess, like a lot of men, 'health' wasn't something I worried about too much. 'It won't happen to me' probably summed up my attitude.

Four years ago, Bob noticed he was starting to go to the loo "more often than I used to. It gradually crept up on me, and to cut a long story short, one day I ended up having a hospital visit for a prostate biopsy.

"Could it be a problem? Well, no. The result came back negative. So I was OK, wasn't I?"

It was at that point Bob started to have his PSA levels checked regularly. PSA – short for Prostate Specific Antigen - records protein levels in the prostate. Bob's should have been around 3 or 4, but in his case they were showing an 8.

"That's when the alarm bells really sounded and a further needle biopsy showed small traces of cancer. Radiotherapy wasn't suitable because I'd had some minor bowel problems in the past so it seemed as if my best bet would be an op to remove the whole prostate.

"That was when I was taken on by Mark Emberton at University College Hospital. Suddenly I had a choice of options, and surgery was starting to look less and less appealing.

"In the end, the decision was really take for me. Although I was keen on – and had read a lot about HIFU (High Intensity Focused Ultrasound) my prostate was thought to be too large, and something called PDT suddenly came at me as the choice."

PDT is used to treat many different cancers – experimentally and fully approved procedures. In this case, the PDT drug is injected into the bloodstream, and is only activated by light used in just the target area where the cancer is.

The light has the effect of shutting down the fine blood vessels and capillaries that supply oxygen to the target cells in the blood. Without the oxygen, the target cells die.

"I suppose the PDT appealed because it is non invasive and having the PDT also didn't rule out other types of treatment in the future. Also, with PDT incontinence and erectile problems were much less likely.

“I also liked the fact that because I was on a trial there would be lots of monitoring and follow up!” he adds.

He says he feels fine now, and after a couple of days he was back to what he describes as a normal routine, including three or four rounds of golf a week.

“I still monitor my PSA levels but if things stay as they are, I will be more than happy. I have become quite a prostate cancer ‘activist’ – if that is the right word, telling all my male friends to go to their GP if they have any worries. Don’t just ignore any symptoms.”

Ends

Further information from David Longman, Director, KILLING Cancer

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