

Australian Prostate Cancer NEWS



2014 Edition I

A Spice to Combat Prostate Cancer?

A spice in your pantry may hold the key to beating prostate cancer.

Over the past four years, Lauren Giorgio, who is part of the Cancer Biology Group at the Basil Hetzel Institute for Translational Health Research in South Australia, has been investigating an innovative potential therapy for the



Lauren is motivated to make a difference to men with prostate cancer and their families.

disease. The focus of her work has been on Curcumin, which is one component of the common household spice Turmeric.

Curcumin has been around for thousands of years, but only recently have researchers begun investigating its medicinal properties. In the case of Ms Giorgio's prostate cancer PhD project, she is interested in its anti-cancer properties.

"I'm looking at the effect of curcumin not only on prostate cancer cells, but also the cells surrounding the prostate. These cells are critical drivers of tumour growth," said Ms Giorgio.

"But one of the problems with curcumin is that it's poorly soluble and broken down very quickly, so it doesn't hang around in the body long enough to have a positive impact."

In collaboration with The Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Chemistry Department, the team has developed compounds that encapsulate the curcumin molecule and protect it from degradation.

As her work is mainly lab-based, Ms Giorgio hadn't had much interaction with prostate cancer patients until she recently met someone who inspired her work further.

"Paddy was diagnosed with aggressive metastatic prostate cancer in 2009 and was told he would not see Christmas that year. But incredibly he has survived more than two years longer than predicted," she said.

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Helping Men Through Their Diagnosis

Despite 1 in 4 Australian men experiencing a prostate cancer diagnosis in their lifetime it continues to be a taboo subject.

Many men are too embarrassed to discuss their diagnosis and what it means, even with their doctor.

This can leave them feeling distant and not making informed decisions about their treatment. It also means family and friends are left feeling helpless and uneducated about the disease and what their loved one is going through.

But now there is help available online. Last year in partnership with Australian Prostate Cancer Research, Australian Prostate Cancer (APC) helped to fund PROSTMATE, a confidential online portal for prostate cancer sufferers, their family and friends to access.

It provides tools to track progress, treatments and appointments, as well as self-help modules to enhance health and wellbeing. It also has online tele-health consultation where patients and their partners can connect to prostate cancer experts from the comfort of their own home.

PROSTMATE Coordinator David Blashki said since its launch in November the site has already been accessed by more than 2,000 people.

"The need for this revolutionary program was identified by men with prostate cancer who can struggle to navigate all facets of their treatment," he said.

The program helps encourage and empower men and their families to take greater control by teaching them about early intervention strategies.

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PROSTMATE will help men deal with the difficulties of prostate cancer from the comfort of their own homes.



Note from the CEO

I come from a family of 6 children, 4 brothers and one sister. One of my brothers passed away

when I was 15 years old and his loss still weighs heavily on my family.

Now my three living brothers are all of an age that a possible prostate cancer diagnosis is an ever-present reality. Considering that more brothers, fathers and sons lose their lives to prostate cancer each year than women do to breast cancer, it's disappointing how little it is spoken about.

For some men a discussion about a prostate cancer exam or about prostate cancer itself is an uncomfortable one. However, we would hope that we can change people's view so that just like any other disease we can talk about it more openly and encourage men to seek a regular check up to ensure any diagnosis of cancer is an early one.

That's part of Australian Prostate Cancer's purpose; to raise awareness about prostate cancer and to support important research into this disease that's affecting so many Australian families.

We are proud of our partnership with PROSTMATE which will no doubt help educate so many men and their families about prostate cancer, and help them through diagnosis and treatment process. PROSTMATE brings the best advice and support to you, wherever you are via an online portal. This is a program which is helping people right now Australia-wide.

Paul

At Christmas time, many of you would have received a letter from us with a Christmas Bell.

Thanks to all of you who wrote a message for a loved one on the bell and returned it to us with a kind donation.

Here are some of the heartfelt messages that we hung on our Christmas Tree of Hope...

You can make a donation to honour a loved one at any time – to do so, please visit our website or phone 8243 1101.

A Spice to Combat Prostate Cancer?

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"Within minutes, Paddy's positivity and passion for life reminded me of how important it is that we continue to look for new treatments for prostate cancer that will help more men outlive their prognoses."

Ms Giorgio said it's incredibly motivating to know she has the training required to make a difference to men with prostate cancer and their families.

"A prostate cancer diagnosis not only affects the man, but also his wife, children and even grandchildren. If the cancer isn't caught early, often the chances of survival aren't good and it's incredibly sad."

Preliminary studies show a specific molecule is successful at protecting curcumin from degradation, without compromising its anti-cancer activity.

"This is exciting progress and a positive step towards a successful prostate cancer therapy."

The research findings also mean that curcumin could potentially be used to more effectively treat a whole range of diseases including other cancers, heart disease, arthritis and some mental disorders.

When not in the lab, Ms Giorgio has been active in spreading the word amongst the public about the importance of prostate cancer prevention by presenting to community groups and speaking on radio.

"I am proud to have spent the last four years of my life working on such a worthwhile project. So many men are not proactive about getting checked for prostate cancer and I hope that the work I've done, both in the lab and within the community, will have a positive impact and ultimately, save lives."

Helping Men Through Their Diagnosis

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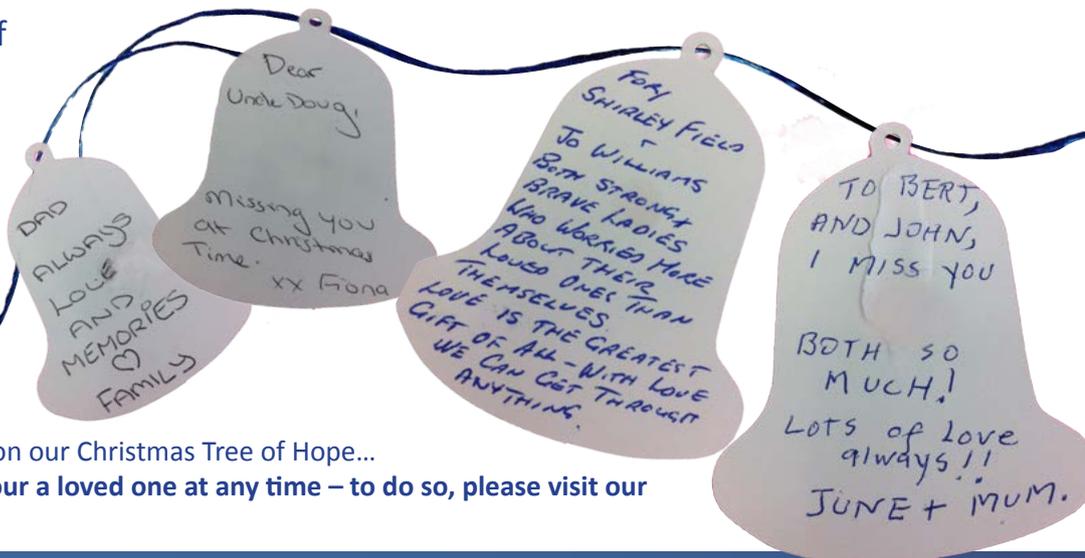
It also gives information that will help them make decisions about new or ongoing treatment and options for advanced prostate cancer management.

"The program provides reliable, up-to-date information for patients and their families and access to experts via online tele-health consultations," Mr Blashki said.

"It also overcomes the barriers faced by men in regional and remote areas of Australia. Patients will be able to access this from anywhere and in the privacy of their own home."

The launch of this program may also mean other cancer sufferers are helped.

"Based on the research data collected from patients and the impact PROSTMATE can make in prostate cancer, there is potential for similar online programs to be developed to support patients with other cancers."



"I'm grateful to be alive..."

-Geoff's Story

If it wasn't for his partner's need for a good night's sleep, 64-year-old Geoff Murch might no longer be with us.

Waking up numerous times a night to empty his bladder had become normal for Geoff, but for his partner Gilda, the disturbed nights became too much.

At Gilda's plea, it was off to the doctor for Geoff. After a consultation he was referred to the Calvary Hospital in North Adelaide for a PSA test. After further tests, Geoff was diagnosed with stage 1 prostate cancer – a complete shock.

"I was gutted. I thought, boy I'm a goner here. You get the big C and that's the end of you."

His diagnosis brought back memories of a bone cancer diagnosis 25 years ago, which gave his wife only 12 months to live.

"We were high school sweethearts and had been married for 22 years. I never accepted that she was going to pass on. They're making new discoveries every day so I always said: when there's life there's hope."

"After the diagnosis she was with us for 16 months. She passed away at home in my arms. She was only 39."

"At the time my daughter was only 17 and my son was 20. It really was a dreadful time of our lives."

It was perhaps this will to fight that helped Geoff battle his own cancer diagnosis. He fully investigated a number of treatments; total removal of the prostate, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

He also heard about high dose radiation in Melbourne, and opted for the interstate treatment.

"You can't worry about pride or be embarrassed because there are doctors and nurses coming in to check everything. But if I didn't go through with the treatment I wouldn't be here."

Even though he suffered some side effects from treatment, Geoff is just grateful to be alive.

Before and after the treatment Geoff sought support from a group of men at Burnside in Adelaide, who had been through the same thing.

"I realised how lucky I was not to have had the cancer metastasise and spread to other areas, like many men had."

He met a 35-year-old man with small children, who eventually died from the disease.

"That was one of the saddest funerals I've ever been to."

Since his diagnosis in 2006, Geoff believes men are more comfortable speaking about their experiences and he encourages anyone who has been diagnosed to seek help from others.

"It's not a death sentence any longer and the main thing is to join a support group. It's good to have friendship with people who have been through the same thing."

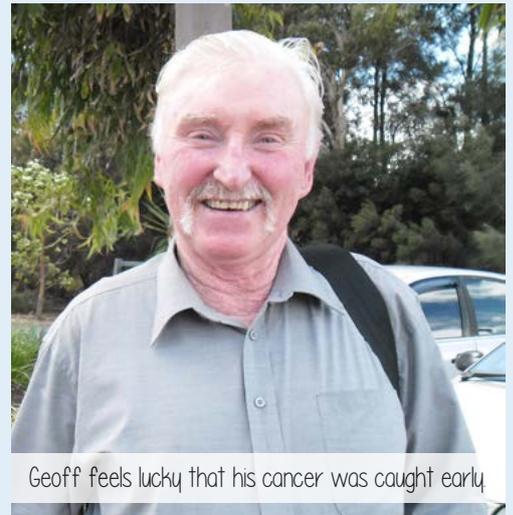
He also encourages men to get a regular PSA blood test and watch out for the signs.

"There's all sort of symptoms; slow stream, fast stream, frequency."

Geoff is a strong supporter of medical research and is hopeful preventative treatments will be discovered.

"Prevention would stop a lot of heart ache and a lot of family grief that happens when family members are going through treatment."

"Research is just essential. It should be fully supported by everybody, not just people who have been through the disease."



Host a dinner to fight cancer

Last year Australian Prostate Cancer's affiliate partner The Hospital Research Foundation (THRF) held The Longest Table inaugural event. It saw over 500 people participate in a virtually connected dinner to help fight cancer.

In 2014, The Longest Table is back! If you love cooking or just love getting together with friends and family, The Longest Table is the perfect way to enjoy fundraising to help people with cancer.

Take your seat at The Longest Table on Saturday June 28th; register online to host a dinner and invite your family and friends to join you. It's a fun, simple concept with life-saving significance. All funds raised through the event support much-needed cancer research.



Visit www.thelongesttable.com.au now to find out more and register your interest.

Stopping the Spread

PhD student Damien Leach has watched his uncle and several friends' fathers suffer from prostate cancer. This drives him as he investigates how and why prostate cancer spreads to other parts of the body in some people and not in others.

Tell us about your research...

Early diagnosis is paramount in prostate cancer. If the cancer can be removed or contained to the prostate then the chances of a person living a long and happy life are high. The problem is when the cancer spreads or metastasises.

My project is focused on the cells (fibroblasts) that surround the prostate cancer, and how they interact with the cancerous tumour, specifically in regard to androgens (testosterone) and how they work within the fibroblast to affect the cancer. The aim of my research is to see how each fibroblast controls the prostate cancer spread; in other words, how these fibroblasts either hold the cancer in place or allow the cancer to move out of the prostate.

How does prostate cancer affect people differently?

Some men with the disease will have the cancer confined to the prostate which is not life threatening. However in patients where the cancer spreads there is a dramatic reduction in patient survival, and unfortunately treatment at this point is largely palliative.

One of the major issues in prostate cancer is determining which patients are more likely to have cancer spread. So by understanding the mechanisms of metastasis we

can defy and develop a predictive test to identify those patients at risk.

Currently, prognosis and treatment is judged on what the cancer looks like under the microscope. If a person is thought to have a non-aggressive tumour, they may not receive any treatment, but be monitored for signs of progression. Unfortunately this can create insecurity and be a considerable emotional strain for people and their families. However, if a person is thought to be at risk of progression, the prostate and tumour can be removed. This of course can affect the patient's quality of life by causing incontinence and other problems. If the cancer spreads or already has spread there are drugs designed to block or inhibit androgens (testosterone), which are important to the growth of normal and cancerous prostate. However, as testosterone is important in a man's natural functioning, this can have a number of negative effects.

Why is your research so important?

My research is aimed at understanding cancer spread, and in turn developing accurate means of determining if cancer will or has already spread. This will be important in helping guide patient treatment by providing markers predictive of prostate cancer spread, with the possibility of future findings providing targets for therapies.



Sadly watching his uncle suffer with prostate cancer motivated Damien throughout his research.

A 'Mo-off' for Prostate Cancer

Huge thanks to the team at Expro Canning Vale in Western Australia for supporting Australian Prostate Cancer with their recent 'Mo-off' fundraiser!

The Expro Team in Kuala Lumpur challenged their Aussie counterparts to a Mo-Off: The team sporting the finest



The Aussie Expro team looking very determined at the start of the Mo-off.

moustachery by the end of November would be classed as the winners. The winners had \$1000 dollars donated to their chosen charity by the losers.

Stephen Bisset created a Just Giving page online for APC on behalf of his team, and generously his company Expro dollar matched the amount he raised.

"We were all very happy to raise a little money for the cause," said Stephen.

Thanks again to the Expro team for supporting Australian Prostate Cancer, we really appreciate your support!

You can raise funds for important prostate cancer research in a variety of fun, interesting and different ways via Just Giving. It's quick and easy:

www.justgiving.com/ausprostatecancer



Team member Merv during the month...

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