

Thoms Kirk

Us TOO

I. Mission Statement

The mission of Us TOO is to help men and their families make informed decisions about prostate cancer detection and treatment through support, education and advocacy.

II. The way it is...

In terms of barriers, many believe that self-worth is found through independence, hard work and self-sacrifice, and those things become barriers to prostate cancer treatment. We know it is hard to communicate from a needy position, but we have to get over that. It's not okay for us to be strong and powerful, or even heroic by saying we have no weaknesses. Doctors, hospitals and insurance companies are intimidating. It takes energy to get past these barriers. Feeling the emotions that accompany a diagnosis of prostate cancer and doing it with a sense of dignity and importance is difficult. Time with the doctors and other health care professionals is limited. Ultimately, what men want to know is, "How bad am I screwed?"

III. What we know...

We know that our health is valuable, and it is not a given. It can and often does disappear or can get away from us. Cancer is scary and stressful, and it is easy to over react. You want to do something about it, or you may want to run away and hide. We must remember that there is hope.

There is also controversy about detection, diagnosis and treatment options. Communication is essential; you are not alone and you cannot do it alone. You have to assemble a team of individuals who are knowledgeable, helpful, open to talking and care about you.

IV. Tips on How-to

Communication involves everyone, and patients have to avoid the impulse to withdraw. Expect your doctor and the staff to be active, attentive and open. This will take work and it will take time, but you are worth it and so are your family members and friends. There's a flood of information, and you need to identify what you need at the right time for you. Patients need to ask questions and take people with them to appointments. Don't hesitate to get second/multiple options, and stay prepared.

V. Resources

Us TOO has materials with suggested questions to ask the doctors on the Us TOO web site. Prepare what you want to ask and need to know. Us TOO also has the *Inspire Prostate Cancer Social Community* and an e-mail-based group called *Prostate Pointers*. The toll-free patient Helpline is 1-800-808-7866.