

Panel Discussion

I. Support Groups

Joel Nowak, MA, MSW

Support groups become an active intervention just like surgery or radiation around the construct of active surveillance. Without a support group, men don't get their PSAs done in a timely fashion, and they almost put the prostate cancer out of their head. Patients need the ideas of availability and ownership. Support groups are a vital piece of prostate cancer treatment.

Participant

It is very important for newly diagnosed men to see that there are a whole bunch of prostate cancer survivors who are alive, happy and living a full life many years after their diagnosis.

II. New Diagnosis

Participant

As a newly diagnosed patient, I didn't realize that there were so many options. I want to do my due diligence to make sure that I feel comfortable with my decision. My urologist has suggested surgery, but I need to continue to educate myself.

Joel Nowak, MA, MSW

You are at the hardest place right now, but you will break through. One day you will wake up, and you will know what you need to do. No one can tell you how to get there, but it will happen.

Participant

I had 22 separate consultations with 22 separate doctors before I made my treatment decision. I have three binders full of information that I gathered, but it came down to when I was in a support group and I saw a man who had come out of surgery the week before. He looked great and he was healthy; that was my moment.

Participant

The other side of the coin is that 99% of active surveillance is knowing when to pull the trigger.

Participant

You should be congratulated because you have taken the reins, and you are steering the horse. That is to be commended because many men don't do that.

III. Proton Beam Therapy

Participant

It is hard to know what is actual factual information and what is marketing information. For instance, I just learned about proton beam therapy, but Dr. Katz said to be careful with that. Is that true?

Participant

Proton therapy has a place in radiation, but it has been used primarily in head and neck cancers in terms of having a proof of benefit. Those same benefits have not been shown in prostate cancer. It has a lot of marketing behind it, and it has a huge price tag. There is no proven benefit. IMRT radiation has equally good results if it is done at a experienced center.

Participant

The guys who do the proton beam therapy are the biggest evangelists for it. Men tend to be evangelists for what they have used or been a part of.

Participant

At Mass General, they use the IMRT radiation prior to utilizing the proton beam radiation. They are hopeful that it is going to be a terrific thing, but at the moment they are not pushing it.

Participant

Another difference between men and women is men generally take ownership in what they have chosen for themselves. Women tend to share the various options with fellow patients.