

Us TOO Florence My Prostate Cancer Journey (Part 2)

So, my journey continues. Back in 2013, I had a regimen of targeted radiation treatments for a spot of prostate

cancer that somehow had gotten in my upper right arm. Dr. Mehlhaff and I kept an eye on my PSA after that and I had two

annual bone scans. The first still showed something "worrisome" in that area, but in the second report that

This is part of a series of true personal stories about men's experience with prostate cancer. These men tell their stories with the hope that it will help someone else traveling the same road.

BY CHRISTOPHER SCHWARTZ
CANCER SURVIVOR



symptoms after the infusion. I didn't after the first, but did after the second and third.

It lasted just 24 hours, but boy oh boy did I ever feel those symptoms. Also, for a couple of weeks after the final infusion, I was extremely lethargic. But that also went away just in time for a vacation to Hawaii.

Dr. Mehlhaff said that would be excellent therapy, and he was certainly correct.

The good news is that for three straight blood checks post-treatment, my PSA has gone down. We will continue with the hormone treatment because the Provenge can't do it on its own due to my somewhat aggressive form of prostate cancer.

Ginney and I have been on this journey for five years now, and we expect that to continue for a good long while.

Having a loving and supportive partner and friend like Ginney has been extremely important for me on this journey. She's been my rock and kept me from giving up. She's also been my driver for these treatments.

There are three partners on this journey and she's my Number One!

We don't use the word "cure." We are treating this disease.

As Doctor Mehlhaff told me when we first met, his job is to see that I die of something else.

Made sense then, makes sense now — and the journey continues.

language was missing.

Good news: The radiation got it!

We continued to monitor my PSA and my hormone treatment (Lupron). My number continued to stay very low and my testosterone was negligible. In December of 2015, I was due for another 6-month Lupron injection. Dr. Mehlhaff and I decided to see what would happen if we tried skipping the injection.

Would my PSA stay low? Would my testosterone go up? Were there any little buggers still in there?

We checked my blood every month and gradually over the next four months my PSA did start a slow climb, as did my testosterone. So, in the spring of 2016, we resumed the hormone treatment and my PSA started a decline.

Then in late 2016, it began a slow increase. We watched it for 3 months and then decided I was a viable candidate for Dr. Mehlhaff's next arrow in his quiver: a drug called Provenge.

This is a series of treatments that consist of seven visits to OUI's apheresis unit (within their Radiation Center in Springfield). The first visit is, of course, spent with the head nurse to discuss vitals, procedure, setting up schedule, etc.

The first treatment is a blood withdrawal (Leukapheresis). This is a process of withdraw-

ing white blood cells for processing at the Provenge Lab in Seal Beach, Calif. This takes about 3 to 4 hours. Before leaving, I was told I had to stop first thing for a milkshake to help replenish my calcium and was given directions to the nearest places.

The second step occurs three days later. In between, my white blood cells are specially packaged, couriered to Portland and flown down to the Provenge lab. There, they are treated by exposing them to a protein from prostate cancer cells and a stimulatory molecule, priming them to selectively attack prostate cancer.

After the lab has treated my white blood cells, they are returned to OUI, where I am supposed to be waiting to have them infused. This part is time sensitive: the infusion must be done by a specific time, otherwise the sample is no good.

Infusion takes about one and a half hours.

That two-step process is repeated two more times, with a week in between. The patient may experience "flu-like"



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NATURAL PERSPECTIVE — Living the slug life



BY EMILY J. UHRIG, PhD
Special to the Siuslaw News

Summer is in full swing, but here on the coast we are generally spared the most scorching temperatures. With plenty of cool, cloudy days our yards are havens for slugs.

Lacking shells, slugs may be less endearing than their relatives the snails, and they usually do not garner the same level of culinary interest as their more distant cousins the clams, oysters and squid.

Nonetheless, slugs are fascinating creatures.

Anyone tending a garden has likely found slugs lounging under rocks or flower pots, or may have seen the aftermath of their feeding.

Slugs love many flowers and leafy vegetables, and some of you may be familiar with the disappointment of turning over a beautiful strawberry only to find a slug has already chewed a large bite out of it.

The most frequent culprits of garden damage, and more than half of Oregon's slugs, are non-native species such as the rust-colored European red slug.

Oregon's native slugs, including the rather iconic banana slug, tend to inhabit forest areas where they have important ecological roles as decomposers and recyclers, showing that not all slugs deserve a bad reputation.

While frustrating to gardeners, it is hard not to be impressed with the scale of destruction done overnight by a cornucopia of slugs (yes, cornucopia is the proper term for a

group of slugs).

Slugs feed using a tongue-like structure called a radula which has thousands of small teeth to rasp away at plant material. The radula grows continuously throughout the slug's life with tooth replacement, similar to that of a shark, ensuring that it remains sharp.

Another of the slugs' calling cards is their distinct slime which is often seen as shiny trails across leaves or up the side of a house. The slime is multi-purpose as it absorbs water to help the slug stay moist while acting both as a glue to hold the slug to surfaces and as a lubricant to help it glide along smoothly.

Engineers have been studying the slime's unique properties to help with building wall-climbing robots. The glue-like aspects of the slime are also being studied in the medical field for developing alternatives to stitches for closing wounds.

From their important ecosystem roles to the potential applications of their slime, perhaps the biology of the slug is something that even ardent plant lovers can still appreciate.

LIVING 50 Plus

Snack foods that promote better sleep

According to the National Sleep Foundation, changes in sleep patterns are a part of the aging process. Many people experience difficulty falling asleep and then staying asleep as they age, and that difficulty can make men and women over 50 feel more tired during the day. But even though difficulty sleeping may be a part of aging, that does not mean men and women over 50 cannot take steps to improve their sleeping patterns. For example, certain snack foods may help to improve quality of sleep, especially when these foods replace less healthy snacking options. While men and women over 50 should always consult with their physicians before making any changes to their diets, the AARP notes that the following are a handful of snack foods that promote better sleep.

Almonds: Magnesium is a mineral with muscle-relaxing properties, and almonds contain enough magnesium to help men and women get a better night's sleep. A small amount of almonds before bed might be enough to make falling and staying asleep easier.

Bananas: Much like almonds, bananas provide a substantial amount of magnesium. Bananas also contain the amino acid tryptophan, which many people associate with Thanksgiving turkey. While tryptophan might be most often associated with the sleepiness people feel after eating a holiday meal, it also has been linked to better sleep quality, so a banana shortly before bed might be just what you need to fall and stay asleep.

Cheese and crackers: One more traditional snack may just help you get a better night's sleep. Cheese and crackers contain tryptophan and carbohydrates, which can induce a better night's sleep and help you fall asleep sooner.

Cherries: Cherries contain the sleep hormone melatonin, and the AARP notes that recent studies indicated that participants who drank tart cherry juice on a daily basis fell asleep more quickly and slept longer and better than participants who did not.

Hummus: The primary ingredient in hummus is chickpeas, which are loaded with tryptophan, folate and vitamin B6. Folate has proven especially beneficial to older men and women who need help regulating their sleep patterns, while vitamin B6 helps the body regulate its clock.

Peanut butter: Peanut butter is another snacking item loaded with tryptophan. Spread some peanut butter on a carbohydrate, whether it's a slice of toast or some crackers, before going to bed, and you may enjoy a better, longer sleep.

Walnuts: Like cherries, walnuts contain melatonin, which can contribute to a longer, more restful night's sleep. Walnuts also can help regulate stress, which is a leading cause of sleeping difficulty. Many men and women experience difficulty sleeping as they age. But the right foods may just help combat such problems and help men and women get a more adequate night's sleep.



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