CHAPTER 19

Looking Back

Engaging Prostate Cancer as a Gay Man at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century

Gerald Perlman

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reflects my experience with prostate cancer as a gay man seeking help in the painfully heterosexist environment of 2000. The narrative looks back at my feelings, my reactions, my concerns, and my revelations and awakenings as I struggled with my own confusing search for help, compassion, and understanding in an environment that was quite unfriendly to gay men. I write of my wrestling with issues of helplessness, identity, anger, sex, shame, and loss, and how I went from being a participant in a support group for gay men to facilitator of that group of courageous men, all of whom found themselves in a similar situation.

KEY TERMS

gay men, heterosexism, HIV/AIDS, impotence, incontinence, prostate cancer, radiation, sex, side effects, support groups
REFERENCES


Prostate cancer is a fatal disease that strikes down 1 in every 6 men! Take the time to inform yourself and your loved ones of the dangers, know the signs, be ready...just in case. Cancer cells travel in blood and lymph systems. Prostate- Male reproductive gland responsible for producing a fluid within semen. Located below the bladder and in front of the rectum. Metastasis- The process of cancer spreading from point A in the body to point B in the body. Tumor- A tissue mass resulting after cells fail to die when they should, or due to abnormal cell division. Tumors are often referred to again in more specific terms: Benign (bah-nine) tumor, which is non-cancerous; and the malignant tumor, the cancerous one. This chapter reflects my experience with prostate cancer as a gay man seeking help in the painfully heterosexist environment of 2000. The narrative looks back at my feelings, my reactions, my concerns, and my revelations and awakenings as I struggled with my own confusing search for help, compassion, and understanding in an environment that was quite unfriendly to gay men. I write of my wrestling with issues of helplessness, identity, anger, sex, shame, and loss, and how I went from being a participant in a support group for gay men to facilitator of that group of courageous men, all of whom Excluding skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer among males in the United States. In fact, around 1 in 9 men will receive a diagnosis of prostate cancer at some point in their lives. Because prostate cancer is so widespread, it is important to know and understand the risk factors. Other studies have produced conflicting results. As a result, many researchers disagree about whether or not ejaculating more often makes males of all ages less likely to develop prostate cancer. One 2009 study found that frequent masturbation might reduce the risk of prostate cancer in males aged 50 and above. However, the same study also suggested that ejaculating more often might increase the risk among males in their 20s and 30s.