Men's Stories – 8 case studies of being diagnosed with prostate cancer told by FAB members

#1

In 2008, I started experiencing being unable to hold my wee when I felt the urge to urinate. After a few occasions I decided to seek advice from my GP. He arranged an appointment for me at Nottingham City Hospital. On that occasion my urine flow was checked. As a result my GP arranged another appointment at the same hospital, Urology Department. I saw a consultant, Mr Harris, who informed me the problem was to do with my prostate

Up until then I have never heard of a prostate. However, Mr Harris explained in depth what it was and the options regarding how it could be dealt with. He allowed me some time to think things over and, when I'd decided, to let him know. My wife and I carefully considered the options and decided to have the operation which took place, followed by a recuperation period and an exercise plan. Prior to this, two biopsies were taken followed by an MRI scan. Before the operation a pre-op was carried out

I kept all the follow up appointments until I was discharged back into the care of my GP, where I have been having my PSA checked half yearly with encouraging results so far

#2

It was a sunny afternoon in 2007 when I decided to go to Jamaica Ways restaurant for my usual bowl of soup. As I was enjoying my meal I noticed some cards showing 3 women on the front, on the information rack which said get your man a Prostate Cancer PSA test. The next day I was so confident of not having prostate cancer, I booked an appointment with my doctor for a PSA test

I was asked:
Do I go to the toilet often at night?
Get pain when passing water?
Have weak flow?
Strain or take a long time while urinating?
Feeling your bladder full?

The answer to all his questions was 'NO'

I had my blood test with no thought about having prostate cancer. At my next appointment I was waiting for my doctor to tell me my PSA level was low. He said your PSA is 7 and I am going to send you for a biopsy

The biopsy was so painful I had to hold on to a nurse with tears in my eyes

The day of the results was the saddest day of my life

When the doctor told me the biopsy was cancerous. He gave me 3 choices:
-Leave it while we monitor it
-Treatment
-Prostatectomy

I asked him, if I was his dad, which one he would choose? He said prostatectomy. On the 13th November 2007 I had my operation which was followed by weeks of radiation therapy. Over the years my treatment consisted of hormone injections and steroids

Since, my health has been stable thanks to the good work by the urology and oncology department. I have been advised I can still run, swim, cycle, and do my gym work. My energy levels are lower than pre-operation but I am still happy to be alive!

My aim with FAB is to try to make black men aware that we are four times more likely to contract prostate cancer and a PSA test for over-40 year olds should be mandatory. Having a high PSA does not mean it is cancerous as it could be that the prostate is swollen which happens with age

My point is I ate healthy and exercised but prostate cancer does not discriminate.
I would like to thank the 3 women for saving and giving me life

#3

I would like to start by saying CANCER is a word, not a sentence. My journey started approximately 15 years ago when my father complained of aches and pains and he was back and forth from his GP. One day the pain was unbearable so he was taken to the hospital. It was days before they discovered he had prostate cancer. At 65 he was considered quite young. A few years later he sadly passed away. Prior to his death my knowledge about the prostate was next to nothing

Following my father's death I did some research and purchased a book about prostate cancer. I remember visiting my GP shortly after my father passed, complaining of aches and pains down below. He assured me I was fine, he did however suggest coming back for a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test when I was 45 years old. PSA is a protein produced by the prostate gland. The PSA test measures the level of PSA in the blood. I was 35 at the time, but 10 years soon flew by

I went for the test and the reading was 4.3, nothing to be alarmed about. I went for a second test and that triggered an appointment with a consultant. He suggested a biopsy because of the family history. I went back to my doctor who said if you're not

experiencing any signs or symptoms it could be quite an ordeal to go through if it's not necessary. I thought hmmm…. and me being me, I did my research

The thought of a strange object being inserted into my back passage was enough to make me cringe, but I thought better to be safe than sorry

Before I knew it I was lying on a table having the three P's prodded, poked and pricked by the doctor. I'm sure women that have had children can empathise with the intrusion of their bodies. I remember sweat was just oozing from me. 10 samples were taken and with everyone I was counting and believe me 10 could not come quick enough!

A few weeks later I was presented with the news that I had prostate cancer. Yes, at 45 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I thought isn't this what old men get? For a brief moment I paused, took a deep breath and then said "right lets crack on and sort it out"

I was fortunate that it was at the very earliest stage. A few options were discussed, however, I was advised to have a Laparoscopic Radical Prostatectomy – a bit of a mouthful. A few months later I had a successful operation and amazingly no significant side effects and no further treatment was required

I knew however that my life had changed and that it would be full of twists and turns and new adventures. Having a catheter for a few weeks was not the most comfortable thing I have experienced but it has had its advantages, like not holding your wee until the commercial break on the TV! I remember one day when my catheter bag was full and I wasn't near a public toilet. I discretely stood at the side kerb near a drain, released the valve, emptied my bag, and off I went…

My story has a beginning, a middle but it does not have an ending. My journey continues but most importantly, I have been given the opportunity to make a difference. FAB is a part of my life and I have met and made friends with some remarkable people

FAB is a T.E.A.M (together everyone achieves more)

I hope that sharing my story will inspire someone in some way.

Take this story away and share it with family and friends because if it helps to save a life, that will be a remarkable story. Remember, cancer is a word, not a sentence

#4

In 2010, I started having pain around my waist and pelvic area; the pain got worse so I went to see my doctor. He told me that it was old age and wear and tear. Several weeks later I went to see my doctor again and was told that he had retired and left the practice

The new head of the practice was a female doctor: she sent me to have some tests done. The blood test came back showing some abnormalities and I was then referred to the Urology Centre at Nottingham City Hospital. I had a prostate biopsy done, some scans and some other tests. It was confirmed that I had prostate cancer. I was treated with 43 sessions of radiotherapy and hormone injections every 3 months for 3 years, followed by blood tests every 6 months. I am now in remission. My last PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) blood test result was 0.3ng/ml

I must give thanks to God for bringing me through and sparing my life

#5

I was diagnosed with prostate cancer in March 2013.
I must say that there's no way that I could say that I had a prostate cancer

The reason for me having a PSA test was because a friend came to see me. I had lost my wife a few months earlier

During his visit, he told me that he had prostate cancer and he had treatment
He asked me if I ever had myself checked for prostate cancer, and I told him yes, and that I was okay
He also asked me did I have a PSA test. I said 'no'
Then he told me that I should go to the GP and ask for it, so I did. And that's why I was found to have a problem. A very big thanks to my friend!

When I was told that I had prostate cancer, it was very hard for me to deal with because I had just lost my wife
I was told by the consultant that he had bad news and good news
The bad news was I had prostate cancer and the good news was, when we went through the options of treatments, radiotherapy was the best treatment for me.
I had my treatment and I had the all clear in May of this year

I was introduced to the Friends and Bredrins Cancer Support Group by Mr Lloyd Ferron mid-way through my treatment
I found the group to be very supportive and friendly. It's very important to know that this kind of help is out there and that you are not on your own and that you can share your experiences with each other
After a short while, I became a member of FAB: thanks to all concerned with FAB

#6

In February 2015, I went to the doctors because I started to feel sharp pain when ejaculating. Before those pains, I had been having regular prostate cancer check-ups because my father died of the disease

It turned out that this time I had missed my annual check-up by 6 months. My GP ran some blood tests and the results of the PSA revealed very high levels

Consequently, I was referred to the hospital for a prostate exam
The result came back 2 weeks later. I was told I had prostate cancer. In May I had surgery, during which my prostate gland was removed

Now 9 months later, I am recovering well and my blood test PSA levels are 0.001ng/ml

#7

I have always tried to be positive in my life, in spite of suffering with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – an airway disease), chronic and lower back pain, pain in my right hip and also suffering with allergies to various things

I have a long family history of prostate cancer. My Grandfather, father and uncles all died from prostate cancer. One of my other Uncles has just been diagnosed with it and has had his operation and treatment

I am fully aware of the consequences of what happens if I or others do not check for prostate cancer, or are not aware of what the signs and symptoms are. Even though I did not have the obvious symptoms, because of my family history, this was on my mind, so in July 2008 I had my annual check which was OK

In June 2009, I had my usual annual check and my PSA test results were high. Within five days of the results, I was sent to see a consultant in Urology (Urology is the medical and surgical specialty that focuses on the urinary tracts of males and females, and on the reproductive system of males) at Nottingham City Hospital

The consultant went through the different types of treatment and I was told to come back. On July 3, 2009 I had my biopsy that caused me instant pain for hours after the biopsy (a biopsy is the removal of a sample of tissue from the body for examination). The results came back positive for prostate cancer. This was followed by another session with my consultant who went through all the treatments on offer

Because of my family history the consultant advised the best option for me was Total Prostatectomy (removal of the prostate gland). From the results I was told that my cancer was of the vicious type which is called ‘Tiger’ [prostate tumours can be likened to ‘pussy cats’ or ‘tigers’. Tiger tumours are more aggressive and tend to spread compared to pussy cat tumours]

Throughout all the stages of my treatment my consultant was very understanding and I found him very easy to talk with

I wanted to live and not die, so there was no real choice as such; I knew I had to take the best option to live. My Dad had the same choice to make, I saw the consequence of not choosing surgery: he died

This made my choice very simple. After speaking with the nurse, taking advice from the consultant, and doing my own research I chose surgery. Which to me was my only chance of living

Not only was I living with the diagnosis of prostate cancer I was still getting over the sudden death of my wife in June 2008. I just wanted to get back to normal life, being a normal Dad to my young daughter and the rest of my family

I cannot tell you how relieved I was because the whole process was so quick. Literally from the diagnosis in July 2009 to the operation in the October 26, 2009 it was all over. The speed at which it all happened helped me to really focus and cope with the diagnosis. I felt that everything ran smoothly and quickly and everything that could have been done was. There were no problems at all from the operation

I cannot tell you how grateful I was that I had the same consultant throughout from my diagnosis through to surgery. Having him as my surgeon through this ordeal made a real difference to me: I felt listened to, I didn't have to worry about repeating myself to new consultants, we had built up a trusting relationship, and he was very sympathetic and understanding. If a Black Men's Cancer Support Group existed back in 2009, and had the consultant explained that there was a group of Black Men who had gone through what I was going through, I would more than likely have gone

Aftercare: November 2009 – I could not get on with the pelvic exercises and was finding it hard. My consultant told me the exercises wouldn't suit everybody, and I felt reassured that it wasn't just me, and it wasn't my fault. I found new ways of doing the pelvic exercises. I spoke to a female pilates instructor who recommended some exercises: low-and-behold they worked for me!

Throughout all of this I have tried very hard to remain as positive as I can

And now for the good news … my PSA result is .003ng/ml. That score means it is very good news

And for even more good news … I am here ready to serve and support others!

#8

The day I found out that I have prostate cancer, after waiting for my PSA blood test from my doctor, was like being told that you are going to be shot. Not knowing if you are going to live or die. Well, give thanks to my creator, and my wife and kids, I survived treatment. Prostate cancer is very worrying in the black mans' life, so I would say to all black men: '*Get your PSA level checked out early with your doctor*.' Give thanks, one love