



## SEA Stories

Support  
Education  
Advocacy

**Arthur Fowle**  
Newnan, Georgia

### **Can you tell us about your diagnosis and treatment?**

The history of my treatment started nine years ago in 2007. My family doctor had been consistently testing my PSA yearly during each physical. Over the previous two years before my diagnosis, my PSA was going up nearly a point each year, but since it had not reached 4.0, my family doctor was not concerned. Finally, when it exceeded the “magical” 4.0, my family doctor referred me to a urologist who specialized in prostate cancer. While undergoing the DRE, my urologist felt several lumps and recommended a biopsy, which showed cancer in 4 out of 12 cores and a Gleason score of 8 (4+4). After doing much research and investigating several treatment options, because of my aggressive diagnosis, my wife and I decided on surgery with, in my opinion, the top robotic surgeon in the southeast. Our decision was actually quite easy, because we felt with my diagnosis, that surgery gave me the best chance for a longer life.

### **What happened after your surgery?**

It was eight weeks after my biopsy before the swelling went down enough that I was ready for surgery. My pathology report after surgery was excellent. No cancer in my lymph nodes nor margins, and a month after surgery, my PSA was undetectable. However, a year later, my PSA began to rise. My surgeon then recommended radiation (IMRT) and I underwent 28 treatments, making sure to exercise after each session. I had virtually no side effects from the radiation, and a month after my treatments ended, my PSA was again undetectable. But a year later, my PSA began to rise. At this point I became quite depressed, because I realized my cancer was chronic, and from this point on, each morning when I woke up, the first thought in my head was thinking about my prostate cancer and what may lay ahead for me down the road. I then began getting my PSA tested every three months and felt I needed to become more aggressive with how I wanted to fight this disease, so I personally sought out the top prostate cancer oncologist in the southeast. He recommended I continue to test every three months, and at that time I completely changed my life around and began what I refer to as my health program. After three and a half years when my PSA exceeded 5.0, my oncologist recommended a Lupron shot, which I received in December of 2013, and since then (three years later) my PSA has remained undetectable.

### **Please tell us about your experiences with your support group.**

After my surgery, my urologist recommended that I attend a prostate cancer support group and that was when I found out about Us TOO International. I very much wanted to talk to someone who had also been through the same surgery as I had, and I found tremendous value attending the US TOO meetings in Fayetteville, GA, headed up by Jim O’Hara. Normally I tend to be a closed-off person, but in this instance, I found it very easy to discuss my situation and prostate cancer within the support group, as well as with my family and friends. Jim also provided a great environment with a wealth of information, excellent speakers, and lively discussions. And always, at the end of each meeting, the group would field any questions, particularly from those new to the group. The support group offered (and still does) a great opportunity to speak directly with men who have been through nearly all treatments and who can answer any questions you might have. It’s been a great forum where those who are affected by prostate cancer can exchange information and advice. So many times I have seen the panic and helplessness of those newly diagnosed, and it has been extremely gratifying to have personally helped those in need become confident in their treatment decisions, as they, themselves, often help others.

### **How do you stay so positive?**

After the radiation treatments failed to stop my cancer, I decided I could either drive myself crazy wondering, worrying, and waiting, or I could do something about it. And I decided I had to take control of my own situation and not depend solely on doctors to direct my course of action. At that point, I determined that there was only

one person (other than my wife), who was 100% interested in my life, and that was ME! So my first step was to get informed. I try, every day – even if it's only for a few minutes – to review something pertaining to prostate cancer and/or my health. For instance, I recently went through all of the [Us TOO Community Conversation videos from Detroit](#). I just feel you cannot sit around all day and dwell on generalized assumptions or mortality rates, because if you do, I think most people assume the worst. That will only get you more depressed. And the worst thing you can do, in my opinion, is to sit around every day waiting for the next test results – and worry about what the results will be and what happens next. I have said many times since I began my health program that, if I die tomorrow, at least I now know that I did everything I could to try to live as long as possible for my family, my friends, and me, and that fact alone always puts a smile on my face.

**Please explain your diet and exercise program and how it has affected your life.**

I have greatly valued the love and support of my wife, family, friends, and support group throughout my treatments, but it was ultimately up to me to grab control of my own situation the best that I could. And that meant making dramatic changes to my mental attitude, my diet, and my exercise plan with the help of my Us TOO support group leader, my dietician, urologist, surgeon, and the internet. My diet includes: a daily heart/diabetic/cancer-healthy breakfast; supplements including aspirin, vitamin D, and antioxidants; a healthy lunch including fruits, vegetables, and nuts; and a restrictive dinner – always avoiding red meat and pork. In terms of exercise, I make sure to regularly stretch, practice yoga, play golf, and work out at the local YMCA utilizing weights and an elliptical machine. I try to do at least one major physical event each day, even if it is only working in our yard. Since beginning this program, I have noticed that I feel better and healthier overall, and my attitude changed dramatically. Even with a life-threatening illness, I feel great. Now, I am not saying this will work for every person, but it has certainly worked for me! I just decided that the healthier I was, regardless of what my PSA test results may show, my quality of life would be better. And, at worst, if further treatments become necessary, the healthier I am, the better chance those treatments would have to succeed. I mean, let's be honest, what do I, or YOU, have to lose?

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