

MOVEMBER

Every year since 2003 you may have noticed men growing a bit of fuzz on their upper lips. This is to raise awareness of prostate cancer, testicular cancer and mental health issues in men.

Movember started in Melbourne and has spread to become a global phenomenon. Over \$580million has been raised worldwide through sponsorship of this event.

Nearly everyone knows someone with prostate cancer. It is the most common cancer diagnosed in men. The key to treatment is early diagnosis and that can be assisted by requesting a blood test called prostate specific antigen (PSA) and prostate examination (digital rectal examination or DRE) where a gloved finger is inserted in the bottom to check for abnormalities. The PSA test measures a substance which is made in the prostate and is found in the blood stream. Not all rises in PSA are because of cancer. Some may be from infection or other reasons. If there is suspicion, the diagnosis may then be assisted by the patient undergoing a prostate MRI.

Cairns has one of three MRI machines in Australia with the associated ProCAD software that improves the method of cancer detection. An MRI involves the patient lying still on his back for 30 minutes. Over 80% of the men having this scan will not have findings suspicious for an intermediate or high grade prostate cancer. This means that random biopsies of the prostate are a thing of the past. Only if a suspicious area is seen on the MRI, will biopsies be required to confirm it. Only two biopsy specimens are usually needed if the biopsy is carried out using the Soteria robot guided system compared with up to 30-40 random samples sometimes performed.

Testicular cancer is a disease of young men and occurs in the 15-45 age group. It is usually found when a lump is detected in the testicle either incidentally or it being noticed after a knock to the testicle. Testicle cancers are usually not painful. Diagnosis is often assisted by ultrasound and blood tests which may show



raised tumour markers. These are substances made by tumours which leak in to the blood stream where they can be measured. The good news is that around 97% of patients will live a normal lifespan with surgical removal when a prosthesis is usually inserted to give a normal appearance. Radiotherapy or chemotherapy is sometimes also needed.

Mental health problems are not always complained about by a large number of men. It seems to be considered as "weak" or "unmanly". However, in recent times a number of high profile men have admitted to having various types of mental illness. Their courage in this respect should be admired and the benefit of their examples is to be praised and respected. Of course, this usually only comes about after quite a period of time.

The first step in getting checked for any of these three areas is always the most difficult.



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