

## Tiger or pussy cat?

**Prostate cancer is the most common cancer affecting Australian men. A major challenge for men diagnosed with prostate cancer, and their doctors, is deciding whether the cancer should be treated or not. The disease seems to exist in two forms – a fast-growing, high-risk form that might benefit from treatment, and a slow-growing form that can require very little treatment other than regular monitoring.**

Unfortunately, currently, there is no way of knowing whether a prostate cancer will become a dangerous “tiger” or will remain an unthreatening “pussy cat”. A new study at the Cancer Council Victoria will attempt to find ways of helping predict a man’s likelihood of developing high-risk prostate cancer.

“We’ll be approaching the problem in two ways,” said Prof Graham Giles, Director of the Cancer Epidemiology Centre.

“Firstly, we’re looking at the things that men are exposed to during their lifetime, to see if any of these put them at lesser or greater risk of developing a high-risk prostate cancer.”

If the study can show which environmental exposures, or lifestyle factors, protect men from high-risk prostate cancer, and which make them more likely to develop high-risk cancer, it should be possible to look at a man’s history of exposure to calculate his risk of developing a high-risk form of the disease.

“A man with a history of high levels of harmful exposures and lifestyle factors, and low levels of protective exposures, would be expected to have a greater likelihood of developing a high-



risk cancer – this information could be used in making the decision about whether to be tested for prostate cancer, or if diagnosed with a cancer, whether to treat it,” explained Prof Giles.

The study will be looking at a range of exposures including foods, medications, chemicals, sun, and lifestyle factors such as obesity.

The second approach being taken by the study is to see whether there might be a genetic basis for the development of high-risk prostate cancers. It is known that prostate cancer runs in families, and the study will try to identify any genetic differences in men who develop the high-risk form.

“We’re looking forward to working with the Victorian community to throw some light on this difficult problem,” said Prof Giles. “We always get wonderful cooperation from those who take part in our studies – for which we are extremely grateful.” ■

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**Mail to:**  
**Prostate Cancer Program, CEC**  
**1 Rathdowne Street**  
**Carlton Vic 3053**

**OR email the details to:**  
**prostate.study@cancervic.org.au**

## New program gets prostate cancer patients connected

**Men who find it tough to openly discuss their prostate cancer experience are being urged to make use of new prostate cancer phone support groups delivered by Cancer Council Victoria in partnership with MensLine Australia, and funded by beyondblue.**

There are separate Phone Groups for:

- Men with advanced cancer
- Younger men
- Family and carers of men with prostate cancer

For the cost of a local call (for landline phones), those affected by prostate cancer can talk to others sharing similar experiences. A professional MensLine Australia counsellor and an experienced cancer health professional facilitate the groups.

Cancer Council Support Officer Robyn Metcalfe said that the easy and confidential nature of the groups appeals to many who need somebody to talk to.

"Some people find it difficult to talk about problems in a face-to-face setting and others are unable to travel to groups, so this service gives participants the flexibility to join in from work or home," she said.

The program provides an outlet for those who otherwise would not be willing to discuss the way cancer impacts their lives. Prostate cancer survivor Paul Bordonaro said that speaking with other men was crucial in helping him understand the potentially overwhelming diagnosis.

"I was speaking to men who were able to relate their personal decisions, and were also able to tell me exactly why they chose the path they chose," he said.

The phone groups meet weekly for about an hour over a period of 6 weeks. All information shared remains confidential. ■

### Join the next phone group today

Call:

13 11 20 (Victoria only)

03 9635 5110 (interstate)

Email: [csg@cancervic.org.au](mailto:csg@cancervic.org.au)

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