

Prostate Cancer - Understand, Prevent and Overcome

By Professor Jane Plant CBE

Virgin Books Ltd, 2004, £16.99, ISBN 1 85277 188 4

Prostate cancer will soon be the most common cancer for men; indeed autopsy studies indicate that the vast majority of elderly men have abnormal growths in their prostate, although most of these had not progressed to become clinically apparent cancers. This book should therefore be essential reading for all, particularly in view of the widespread ignorance of the subject. The book provides an understandable description of the biology and a translation of the words that you will encounter from doctors. It also provides practical advice, from someone with first hand experience, on how to choose your doctor and work with them and with family and friends to make the right choices. Which medical treatment is right for you: the likely consequences, good and bad. It would be easy to focus on some of the dietary advice, which may initially seem extreme, and then dismiss the whole book. This would however be wrong: the author of this book is not a crank or someone promoting an alternative product. Jane Plant is a distinguished geochemist, whose own research had been very successful in identifying how variations in soil composition in different geographical regions could be responsible for specific localised health problems in livestock and in human populations. When diagnosed with breast cancer herself, she then turned her scientific mind to address the questions that had become of vital personal importance: "Why me?" "What can I do about it?" The undoubted huge success of medical research over recent years has generated perceptions that inadvertently lead many to incorrect answers to these questions. It is widely believed that the explanation is all "in your genes" and therefore there is nothing that you can do about it. Early hope that specific cancer-causing genes would be identified and the cancers then cured by gene therapy has proven to be extremely naïve.

Jane Plant astutely realised the failings of the standard answers and set about applying her own scientific background, taking a wider view of the evidence in search of more substantive answers. Her own work had taken her around the world and she became aware that breast and prostate cancers were incredibly rare in rural China and Japan. This was not due to different genes: migrant populations, such as Japanese in North America, acquire the same incidence of these cancers as seen in Western

societies within a very short period. The same trends are even apparent in Westernised cities in the East. This clearly implicates an environmental problem rather than variations in genes. A careful examination of Eastern lifestyles then identified fundamental differences in diet that appeared to fit nicely with considerable experimental evidence. Interwoven within the subsequent explanation is the remarkable story of the personal journey of the author – in the opposite direction – a Western woman who adopted the dietary principles of an older Eastern culture in order to successfully control her cancer. From this are derived a series of practical recommendations, each supported by detailed scientific evidence. It is stressed that these are to empower the patient to take some control to help them work with conventional medical treatments, and certainly not as a replacement.

The book refers to the recent overview of cancer research in the UK compiled by the National Cancer Research Institute, and how this highlighted the relative neglect of the important issues of patient care and cancer prevention. What is not stated is that the critical issues identified in this book were hardly mentioned in the NCRI overview. How could an accomplished scientist evaluate all of the evidence and yet arrive at conclusions so different to that of the collective establishment? It would be foolish to dismiss this due to her lack of specialist knowledge. It may be wiser to concede the value of thoughtful considerations from a distinguished scientist from outside the field, unbiased by dogma, prevailing fashions or vested self-interest (other than that of someone who had become a consumer of this science). A potential mediator of the effects of diet was highlighted in this book, the same factor is also receiving considerable attention from the US National Cancer Institute and most of the major pharmaceutical companies, but it was not even mentioned by our NCRI: who is out of step? The real value of this book is that it empowers the reader with knowledge; it answers the question – there is something that you can do about it, not just those who have cancer, but all of us who wish to do something to reduce our risk.

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