

# Prostate Cancer

By Alakananda Devi, M.B., B.S. (Lond.)

Prostate cancer, Ayurvedically, is a tumor of the prostate gland involving provocation of all three doshas. Because the prostate gland forms part of the male reproductive system, *shukra dhatu*, prostate cancer reflects the physical, emotional, and spiritual relationship which the affected man has had with his reproductive capacity. And because the *shukra dhatu* is the seventh and last *dhatu*, receiving the essence of food refined through the previous six *dhatu*s, any disorder at this level also reflects the overall relationship with the entire body. Negative lifestyle habits and diet, which seem at the time to have caused no harm, may eventually manifest in the form of *tridoshic* disturbance of the prostate gland.

## Causes of Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer arises from a combination of *doshic* disturbances in the *shukra dhatu* and accumulation of *ama*, or toxins, in the vicinity of the prostate gland. Once one *dosha* is provoked in the *shukra dhatu*, and this provocation goes unchecked, the other two *doshas* will gradually accumulate there also, leading to *tridoshic* provocation.

There are many factors which lead to *vata* provocation in the *shukra dhatu*. These include excess discharge of semen, emitting semen during the daytime, and habitually emitting semen outside the context of a safe, nurturing relationship. Hasty or surreptitious sexual activity, without time to relax afterwards, will also provoke *vata*. Holding back the natural urge to ejaculate, once at the point of ejaculation, is very *vata* provoking and also causes congestion of the prostate gland. Excess bicycle riding, or other forms of "bumpy" activity involving sitting astride a saddle, will also lead to *vata* provocation in the *shukra dhatu*. Exposure to electromagnetic fields, microwave or radiation is another significant cause of *vata* in *shukra*, particularly if one habitually sleeps near a live electrical outlet. Habits that are generally *vata*-provoking to the entire system, such as working night shifts, drinking coffee, and over-consumption of raw or dry foods, may eventually cause *vata* provocation in the *shukra dhatu*.

*Pitta* may be provoked in the *shukra dhatu* due to exposure to infective agents such as gonorrhea or syphilis. Consumption of spirits, spicy food, salt, or sour fruits, may also provoke *pitta* in *shukra*. If anger or frustration is associated with the reproductive act, *pitta* will quickly become provoked in the reproductive system. Stagnation of one's creative energies, excess sleep, lack of exercise, a sedentary lifestyle, and a high fat diet, may cause *kapha* to accumulate in the *shukra dhatu*, leading to benign prostatic hypertrophy or, if the other *doshas* become involved, to prostate cancer.

Because of its anatomical position, the prostate gland is vulnerable to the accumulation of *ama* in both the urinary bladder and the colon. Benign prostatic hypertrophy may cause partial or complete urinary retention, leading to *ama* and infection in the urinary bladder. This in turn causes *ama* to accumulate in the prostate gland, where a malignancy may eventually develop. Above all, toxins accumulated in the colon and rectum are readily transferred to the prostate gland, where these toxins may give rise to carcinoma. Thus constipation, indigestion, improper food combining (such as mixing milk with meat, fish, beans or grains), eating immediately before sleeping, snacking, and any factors that create toxins in the colon are directly implicated in the causation of prostate cancer.

Environmental toxins ingested in food and accumulated in the colon may expose the prostate gland to carcinogenic chemicals such as pesticides and solvents. The *shukra dhatu* is also particularly vulnerable to the effects of radiation exposure. Radiation is a *tridoshically* provoking factor which may, at this time in history, be playing a significant part in the etiology of prostate cancer. Unfortunately, the burden of proof rests on residents in the locality of a nuclear installation environment, whose cancers may be related to nuclear emissions.

### **Detection of Prostate Cancer**

Prostate cancer can be detected both by pulse diagnosis (to check for *tridoshic* provocation), and by digital examination of the prostate gland, via the anus. Ideally, men over the age of forty-five should regularly examine their own prostate, to check for any enlargement or irregularity. In practice, however, many older men have been trained to regard inserting a finger in the anus as something dirty, disgusting or perverted. I have met a number of patients who had only the vaguest idea of where the prostate is situated. Health education is very much needed to encourage men to play an active part in the prevention and detection of prostatic disorders.

### **Prevention of Prostate Cancer**

Prevention essentially lies in the removal of causative factors. This requires that sexual activity take place in a calm, safe, relaxed environment, and is not associated with guilt, fear, anger, or frustration. Ayurvedically, the general rule is that seminal emission can take place roughly once a month, although this amount may be considerably increased in the case of a young, healthy man, and reduced in one who is old, sick, or weak. Sexual activity should take place within a safe, loving relationship, and should not be divorced from the other aspects of relationship. Sexual addiction, using orgasm as a means of escape, rather than as a means of giving life or expressing love, provokes *vata* in the *shukra dhatu*, leading to prostate cancer or other reproductive disorders.

Proper diet, exercise, and lifestyle, and the maintenance of colon health (through meal timing and food combining), is essential for older men. Many of the same factors that may create prostate disorders, such as sedentary lifestyle and excess fat consumption, also contribute to other disorders such as heart disease and arterial disease. Thus it is not uncommon to find a man affected by a combination of these ailments, all having the same causative factors.

In addition to these lifestyle measures, the prostate gland requires daily care and attention. Just as the teeth need to be cleaned daily to prevent cavities, the prostate gland must also be properly maintained. Daily castor oil massage of the prostate, using cold-pressed castor oil, takes only a few minutes each day. The prostate may be massaged either anally or at the perineum, to maintain a healthy prostate and to prevent hypertrophy or cancer. In addition, daily perineal exercise should be performed, to squeeze and pump the prostate. The best way to do this is to practice *ashvini mudra*. This consists of rapid contractions of the anal sphincter while holding the breath on the inhale and applying *jalandhara bandha*, or chin lock. *Ashvini mudra* not only enhances circulation and lymphatic drainage of the prostate gland, but also raises the sexual and creative energies which, if blocked at the level of the prostate gland, may give rise to cancer. According to Gheranda Samhita, verses 82 and 83, *ashvini mudra* awakes the *kundalini shakti*, gives strength and vigor, and prevents premature death.

### **Prostate Cancer and the Chakra System**

The prostate gland is associated with *muladhara chakra* (the root *chakra*), *apana vayu*, the downward moving air responsible for ejaculation, urination, and defecation, and *prthvi mahabhuta*, the Earth Element. The root chakra is the seat of the sperm survival urge, and governs procreation, among other functions. There is also a connection between the prostate gland and *svadhisthan chakra*, the second *chakra*, seat of the water element, *ap mahabhuta*. All non-procreative aspects of sexual intercourse, both erotic and affective aspects as well as addictive and destructive ones, are related to *svadhisthan chakra*. Imbalances or blockages or energy associated with either the first or second chakra can lead to disorders of the prostate gland, and, eventually to prostate cancer. Hence, in both the prevention and treatment of prostate cancer, it is extremely important to address the overall relationship with sexuality, procreation, and the entire spectrum of generative and creative energy. An infantile, juvenile, or unintegrated approach to sexuality is harmful to health and can lead to prostate cancer, both by setting up a negative energy pattern related to the reproductive system, and by causing unhealthy behaviors which directly damage the prostate gland.

Blocked creativity is similarly harmful to health and can give rise to cancer. A life devoid of meaningful creative expression is a physically, mentally, and spiritually destructive situation. Whenever the energy of creation is absent, the energy of destruction, *tamas* – darkness, dullness, and ignorance, will take over. This destructive energy will readily find expression within the shukra dhatu, the tissue associated with procreation, generation, and creation.

### **Treatment**

A sixty-two year old single man diagnosed with prostate cancer adamantly refused surgery. Instead, he chose to heal his cancer with organic foods, Ayurvedic herbs, yoga, meditation, and ballroom dancing. Now, at sixty-seven, he is fit, healthy, and still dancing. His approach was a truly holistic one. First, he assumed complete autonomy, refusing surgery against the advice of both his allopathic and his Ayurvedic physicians. Then, he pursued physical healing through diet and herbs, emotional health through the new, nurturing relationships he formed with fellow dancers, and the spiritual health through yoga, meditation and clear spiritual commitment. Most importantly, he also dedicated himself to ballroom dancing as form of creative expression.

However, by no means is every man with prostate cancer able, ready, or willing to work on all these levels. All too often, cancer of the prostate may be the effect of a life dominated by sheer physical and economic survival. To such men, emotional or spiritual transformation may be perceived as something alien or threatening. It is important that the Ayurvedic physician not impose upon the man with prostate cancer the physician's model of the way healing ought to be approached. With genuine compassion and understanding, the physician must allow the patient to determine which areas of his life he is willing to change, and which he prefers to avoid. If he is willing to change his diet and take herbs, but unwilling to practice emotional awareness or meditation, this is his choice, and one that he has every right to make. Change on many levels includes embarking on the work of forgiving grudges, reviewing one's life, and opening spiritual consciousness.

### **Diet**

It is difficult to recommend a specific diet for prostate cancer. This is a *tridoshic* provocation, and therefore the diet should be a balanced one, avoiding extremes which might further provoke one of the doshas. Secondly, there frequently are concurrent systemic conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, or atheroma, in which case the diet may have to be tailored in accordance with these conditions. However, to prevent further accumulation of *ama* in the colon, a strict Ayurvedic regimen for the maintenance of *agni*, the digestive fire, must be followed. This involves leaving at least three hours between meals or snacks, not sleeping within two hours of eating, not drinking water within two hours of eating, not combining incompatible foods, and avoiding old, cold, and stale foods and drinks, including ice water and ice cream.

## **Yoga Therapy**

Prostate massage using castor oil should be performed daily, as should *ashvini mudra*. *Asanas* that apply perineal pressure are very important, for example, *kukutasan gomukhdsan*, and *padpedandsan*. *Salabhasan* (locust pose) is also extremely useful, as are the inverted poses, *sirsasan* and *sarvangasan*. The *marma* point for the prostate is *Trik marma* (subcutaneous pressure point) at the tip of the coccyx. This should be massaged daily.

## **Conclusion**

There are a number of extremely valuable Ayurvedic herbs which may be used in the treatment of both benign and malignant swelling of the prostate. However, the importance of simple measures should not be overlooked. Prostatic massage, *ashvini mudra*, Yoga therapy, the maintenance of good *agni* and a clean, healthy colon, are essential in both the prevention and treatment of cancer of the prostate.

## **Recommended Reading**

Schachter-Shalomi, Z., and Miller, R. *From Age-Ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*. Warner Books, NY. 1995. Published in the Protocol Journal of Botanical Medicine, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp184-186

Alakananda Devi is director of Alandi Ayurvedic Clinic in Boulder, Colorado, and principal teacher of Alandi Gurukula of Ayurveda, a traditional ayurvedic school and apprenticeship program. She can be reached at 303-786-7437 or by email at: [info@alandiashram.org](mailto:info@alandiashram.org)