



It's Movember, and a timely reminder that men shouldn't be shy!

The Movember campaign runs each November with the aim of improving awareness of men's health issues. Dr Anil Shah, of Newham LMC, explains how best to encourage men to monitor their prostate health and seek advice when they have concerns.

Men are happy to openly talk and brag about many things, such as: the latest football results; their last sexual conquest and how many beers they downed last night. However, when it comes to health there appears to be a different story.

Despite being the most common cancer in men, with nearly 50,000 men being diagnosed every year, prostate cancer appears to be a massive taboo. Most men may think: 'Not me! ... I can't get that ... check myself? Don't be daft!'. Whilst that is a common consensus amongst my friends, colleagues and fellow males their views are wrong - currently in the UK, over 330,000 men are living with the big PC! And believe it or not 11,000 of my fellow men die every year.

I know through discussion that some men don't know where or what the prostate is! For clarification, the prostate is a small gland in the pelvis that only men have. It is similar to the size of a satsuma and is located between the penis and the bladder.

The causes of prostate cancer are largely unknown however the risk of diagnosis can be increased for certain groups of men. For instance, the chances of developing prostate cancer increase as you get older as most cases develop in men aged 50 or older.

Prostate cancer is also more common in men of Afro-Caribbean or African descent but is less common in men from Asian descent. Men whose father or brothers were affected by prostate cancer also have an increased risk of developing the condition themselves.

So, what can be done to raise the profile of prostate cancer and encourage men to seek help, advice and support from their GP if they think something isn't right? Sadly, all too often symptoms are ignored, however it is great to see that social media and national campaigns are now raising greater awareness.

Symptoms of enlarged prostate can include:

A weak or slow urinary stream.

A feeling of incomplete bladder emptying.

Difficulty starting urination.

Frequent urination.

Urgency to urinate.

Getting up frequently at night to urinate.

A urinary stream that starts and stops.

Straining to urinate.

If experiencing such symptoms, it is crucial that us men book an appointment with our GP. I must stress that these symptoms do not necessarily mean you have cancer as they are often caused by other medical conditions that can be successfully treated - but remember it's better to be safe than sorry!

This month is the launch of the now well established 'Movember' campaign. Although Prostate cancer is a big focus, the Movember foundation supports other men's health issues including: testicular cancer, male mental health and suicide prevention. The organisation is committed to changing the face of men's health and is in fact targeting a 25% reduction in premature male deaths from these conditions. Campaigns like this are a fantastic tool in getting the message out there and upping the ante for men's health.

So, if you do visit your GP - what will we do?

There are two main tests to test for prostate cancer:

Digital rectal exam (DRE) - During a DRE, your doctor inserts a gloved, lubricated finger into your rectum to examine your prostate, which is adjacent to the rectum.

Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test - This is a blood test that measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. PSA is a protein produced by both cancerous and noncancerous tissue in the prostate.

An MRI scan may also detect prostate cancer. On a positive note, prostate cancer can be cured when detected and treated early! The vast majority of prostate cancer cases (more than 90 percent) are discovered in the early stages, making the tumours more likely to respond to treatment. Treatment doesn't always mean you have to have surgery or chemotherapy.

So come on guys ... don't be shy - please take men's health issues seriously and don't be afraid talk about them. Help us raise awareness and seek advice from your GP if you have any associated symptoms or concerns. I cannot stress this enough. Life is precious, protect it and remember in the case of the big PC, if caught early survival rates are high - it is one of the most curable forms of cancer so shout about it and don't let this be a silent killer anymore.

Some useful resources:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/prostate-cancer/>

<https://uk.movember.com/>

<https://menunited.prostatecanceruk.org/>