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Winter 2025

AWARENESS

Prostate Cancer Support Toronto

The Role of Nutrition in Prostate Cancer

**By Dr. Daniel Lander, ND
and Loreal Legare**

Did you know that what you eat could influence the progression of prostate cancer? Research is uncovering how dietary choices not only support overall health but may also improve quality of life and slow the disease's progression.

Why Does Diet Matter?

Nutrition is fundamental to overall health, providing the body with the energy and nutrients needed for daily functioning. However, it may also directly impact prostate cancer. This is thought to be due to the effect that diet can have on:

- **Reducing inflammation:** Many chronic diseases, including cancer, are associated with inflammation. Certain foods, especially plant-based ones, contain compounds that help reduce inflammation.
- **Supporting immune function:** A strong immune system is not only crucial for fighting infections, it also helps control the spread of cancer cells.

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Dr. Daniel Lander, ND

- **Increasing antioxidant capacity:** Plant-based foods are rich in antioxidants, which lower oxidative stress and neutralize free radicals in the body. This is important to protect the body from DNA damage, a key factor in preventing the development of cancer.

What the Research Says

Recent studies have highlighted the benefits of plant-based diets for men with prostate cancer, showing that such diets may help slow disease progression, improve quality of life and reduce the need for invasive treatments. In fact, three important studies were published within the last year adding to the growing base of evidence.

One study of more than 2,000 men diagnosed with non-metastatic prostate cancer found that those who ate the most plant-based diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, were nearly 50 per cent less likely to have their cancer worsen over time compared to those who ate more meat, dairy and eggs. *Reference 1*

In another study of nearly 1,000 men on active surveillance for low-grade prostate cancer, those who consumed a healthy diet focusing on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes and limiting refined grains,

added sugars and saturated fats were less likely to have their cancer increase in grade. This means they were less likely to need more invasive treatments like surgery or radiation. *Reference 2*



Loreal Legare

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In addition to these studies on cancer progression, another study found that in a group of more than 3,000 prostate cancer survivors, those who followed a plant-based diet reported a better overall quality of life. They experienced fewer urinary and bowel problems, better sexual function and overall vitality after their treatments compared to those who ate more animal-based foods.

Reference 3

How to Eat for Prostate Health

Adopting a plant-based diet doesn't mean giving up all animal products. Instead, it's about making plant foods the foundation of your meals. Here are some practical tips to get started:

- **Prioritize whole foods:** Choose fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes. These are packed with fiber, antioxidants and natural compounds that may help combat cancer progression.
- **Experiment with plant-based proteins:** Try swapping meat-based meals for alternatives like lentils, chickpeas, tofu or different beans. For example, try a hearty lentil soup or a bean-based chilli.
- **Incorporate healthy fats:** Include plant-based fats, such as avocados, nuts, seeds and olive oil. Limit animal-based saturated fats like butter or cream.
- **Reduce processed foods:** Avoid refined grains, added sugars and heavily processed snacks. Instead, snack on fresh or frozen fruits, raw nuts or vegetables with hummus.
- **Start Small:** Try replacing one meat-based meal per week with a plant-based option. Gradual changes are more sustainable.

Focusing on a plant-forward diet can be a proactive step toward better health for men with prostate cancer. The growing body of evidence underscores the potential of dietary choices to influence disease progression and improve quality of life. By focusing on nutrient-rich, plant-based foods, you can support your body's natural defenses, enhance your overall well-being and potentially slow the progression of your prostate cancer.

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Remember, small changes add up over time. Start by incorporating a few more plant-based meals each week, and see how your body responds. Before making significant changes to your diet, it's always a good idea to consult with a healthcare provider, such as a naturopathic doctor, to ensure your nutrition plan meets your specific health needs.

References:

- 1. Liu VN, Van Blarigan EL, Zhang L, et al. Plant-Based Diets and Disease Progression in Men With Prostate Cancer. JAMA Netw Open. 2024;7(5):e249053.**
- 2. Su ZT, Mamawala M, Landis PK, et al. Diet Quality, Dietary Inflammatory Potential, and Risk of Prostate Cancer Grade Reclassification. JAMA Oncol. 2024. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2024.4406.**
- 3. Loeb S, Hua Q, Bauer SR, et al. Plant-based diet associated with better quality of life in prostate cancer survivors. Cancer. 2024;130(9):1618-1628.**

***Dr. Daniel Lander, ND** is an associate professor at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine in Toronto. He is also the Director of the CCNM Integrative Cancer Clinic, where he supports people during and after their cancer treatments with nutrition and integrative therapies. He currently serves as the Chair of the American Board of Naturopathic Oncology.*

***Loreal Legare** is a fourth year Naturopathic Intern at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, where she sees patients at the Schad Naturopathic Clinic and the CCNM Integrative Cancer Clinic in Toronto.*



PCS Toronto's Path-breaking Work Lights a Bright Spark in Faraway India

By Govinda Kumar Ramakrishna

Inspired and encouraged by his involvement with PCS Toronto, board member Govinda Ramakrishna has founded a pan-India, non-profit organization named Prostate Cancer Support Society (PCS Society) based in Kochi, a major port city on India's southwest Malabar Coast.



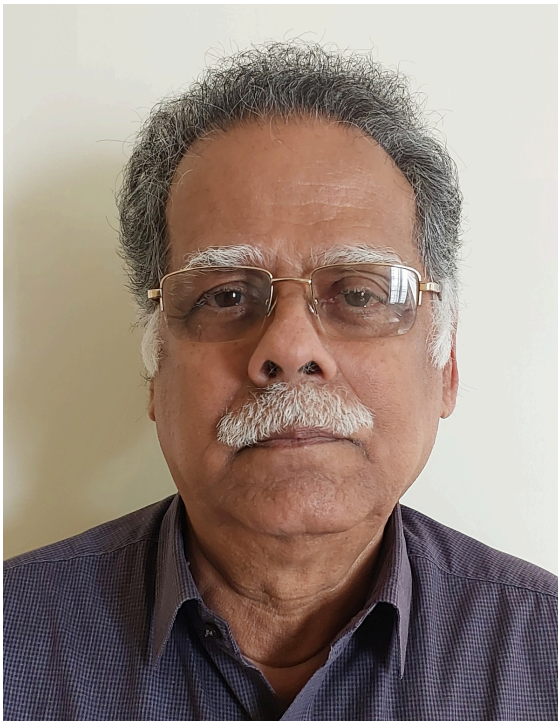
Govinda has been associated with PCS Toronto since he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2016. The very day he was diagnosed, he met current co-chair Denis Farbstein, who was volunteering at North York General Hospital's urology clinic. Denis was Govinda's friend, guide and philosopher during his journey through the treatment and recovery phases. Along with being a member of PCS Toronto's board, Govinda is also a volunteer peer navigator at the Odette Cancer Centre at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

During his visit to India, Govinda found that the concept of a support group is not very popular in India. The few support groups that have been registered in India over the years were founded and managed by doctors and were ultimately not very effective because of their patients' lack of time and enthusiasm.

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Encouraged by PCS Toronto and a few like-minded survivors, patients and caregivers in India, Govinda founded and registered Prostate Cancer Support Society on Oct. 20, 2023. The motto of the society is, “Educate, Encourage and Enhance Patients’ Lives.”

The website can be found at www.pcssociety.org.



Govinda Ramakrishna

The society draws its inspiration from PCS Toronto and the structure is modelled accordingly. It is managed by an executive committee with the help of an advisory board consisting of doctors and other professionals. PCS Toronto’s previous co-chair, Keith Braganza, and Dr. Andrew Loblaw, a well-known radiation oncologist with Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, are part of the advisory board.

The Heart of the Matter: Prostate Cancer Survivors Ignore Heart Health at Their Peril

By John Schofield

More than two years later, I still feel like kicking myself sometimes for not acting faster. Damn it, I could have died!

I started feeling the first signs of a serious problem days before my heart attack in August 2022. On my brisk walks to and from the subway on my commute – or during other periods of exertion – I'd get an odd sensation in my chest. As soon as I stopped, it would go away.

The first time it happened, I should have skipped the morning commute and headed straight for the emergency department. I thought it might be related to a recent bout of COVID. And since 2012, my primary health concern had been prostate cancer (originally a Gleason 8). What else could go wrong? The thought of an impending heart attack hadn't crossed my mind. After all, I'd been a vegan since my initial prostate cancer treatment in 2012 (although my diet was still not as healthy as it should have been). I had also forgotten my father's experience with angina years before he died of prostate cancer at the age of 67 in 1987.

When the sensations kept happening, I finally tumbled to the fact that I should get it checked out. My family doctor scheduled me for an echocardiogram. But my heart's patience with my brain finally ran out on Aug. 16 at about 3 in the morning.

I woke up to go to the bathroom and suddenly my heart felt like it was beating out of my chest. My wife, who's usually quite a sound sleeper, must have sensed something was wrong because she called out to me, asking if everything was okay. The answer was no.

My energy drained out of me and I began feeling faint and nauseous. For a minute or two, Lori and I debated if we should call 911 or drive to the hospital. Thankfully, we opted to call the ambulance.

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“Survivorman” John Schofield
On one of his daily, brisk,
heart-healthy walks in his East
Danforth neighbourhood

Ten minutes later, two young, rather petite female paramedics came to the door. One of them urged me to recline on the bed while she hooked me up to her machinery. Both of them were remarkably calm, which helped dial down my panic a few notches.

“You’re having a heart attack,” the paramedic confirmed only five minutes later (it seemed like an eternity). Again, in her calm voice, she explained she was going to attach a defibrillator in case my heart stopped. (That wasn’t quite as reassuring.) I asked if I should chew on a couple of Aspirins. She said those would be coming, and a few minutes later (again, it felt like an eternity), I was presented with two tablets.

During this time, the paramedic’s partner had been calling ahead to determine where I should go. It turned out to be Sunnybrook. The paramedics put me on a stretcher and, amazingly, carried me down our second floor

stairs and out into the waiting ambulance. Lori climbed in and we made our way along the hushed streets of the city. The activity beside me and Lori’s whispered prayers faded into the background as I focused on taking one deep breath after another.

At Sunnybrook, I was quickly delivered into the care of a wonderful cardiologist and a team of amazing nurses and specialists. Through a small incision in my right wrist, an angiogram revealed a 100-per-cent blockage of my left anterior descending (LAD) artery. They call it the “widowmaker” heart attack.

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Through the same incision (I can't even see it anymore), the cardiologist inserted one stent. The feeling of relief in my chest was almost instantaneous. I felt an incredible sense of gratitude. Thanks be to God and our fantastic health care system, my life had been saved! An hour earlier, it could have gone either way.

During my few days of recovery at Sunnybrook and Michael Garron Hospital – and in the 29 months since, I've had a lot of time to reflect on that incident and work on improving my cardiovascular health. But one thought that has come through loud and clear is that ALL your organs deserve your tender loving care and attention – not just your prostate!

Research has indicated that men with prostate cancer have a higher incidence of cardiovascular disease compared to those without prostate cancer. There are treatment-related risks, too: Androgen deprivation therapy (ADT), a common treatment for prostate cancer, has been associated with increased cardiovascular risks and metabolic syndromes in patients.

Back in the pre-pandemic days, when PCS Toronto's Awareness Nights were held at the lovely Toronto Botanical Gardens, one guest who was always sure to pack 'em in was the very entertaining and informative Dr. Mark Moyad. He is the Jenkins/Pokempner Director of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Education at the University of Michigan Medical Center's Department of Urology. And one of his perennial mantras was, "What's good for your heart is good for your prostate."

The author of numerous books, including *Promoting Wellness for Prostate Cancer Patients* (Ann Arbor Editions, 2009), Dr. Moyad notes in the book that, even among men diagnosed with and treated for prostate cancer, the number 1 cause of death is cardiovascular disease.

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“In addition,” he writes, “there is now plenty of clinical research to suggest that being heart healthy after being diagnosed with prostate cancer may actually increase the chances of beating prostate cancer itself.”

Since my heart attack, I’ve been trying to do all the right things in terms of diet, exercise, sleep and stress-reduction. It’s a process. There are lots of good books that can help, of course. One that holds a special place on my shelves is *Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain* by Dr. Bradley Bale and Amy Doneen.

But the bottom line is this: I hope you’ll be wiser than I was and take your heart health to heart BEFORE you have a cardiovascular “event.” And in the words of Dr. Spock, may you live long and prosper.

John Schofield is a member of the PCS Toronto board and editor of the newsletter.

Ontario First in Canada to Administer New Prostate Cancer Treatment

The Ontario government is connecting more people to care by being the first Canadian jurisdiction to publicly fund and administer PLUVICTO, a new treatment for advanced-stage prostate cancer that is now covered under the province's publicly funded drug program.

“Our government is giving people access to more treatment options by expanding public access to new medications and treatments,” said Sylvia Jones, deputy premier and minister of health. “We are excited to celebrate the administration of the first dose of PLUVICTO in partnership with London Health Sciences Centre, as one more way our government is connecting more people to the care they need when they need it.”

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in Canada, affecting one in nine men during their lifetime. PLUVICTO is a targeted radioligand therapy that utilizes lutetium-177, a medical isotope, in combination with a targeting compound, ligand, to treat advanced prostate cancer. The province is working with hospital partners to implement PLUVICTO as a standard treatment for those with advanced-stage prostate cancer. Over the coming months, it is anticipated that PLUVICTO will be available for eligible patients at most of Ontario's cancer treatment centres.

Ontario is a world leader in the production of life-saving medical isotopes. In 2022, Bruce Power's Unit 7 became the first power reactor in the world to produce lutetium-177. Through the installation of a second isotope production line at the Bruce nuclear station, the province is taking action to double the production of lutetium-177 at the Bruce site to help meet growing demand.

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“Our government is proud to be the first in Canada to administer a publicly funded dose of PLUVICTO, a lifesaving treatment for advanced-stage prostate cancer, now publicly funded for patients across Ontario,” said Minister of Energy and Electrification Stephen Lecce. “With over 247,000 Canadians diagnosed with cancer each year, including in my own family, this groundbreaking initiative highlights Ontario’s nuclear leadership in medical isotope production and ensures that patients have access to cutting-edge care that will save lives.”

To determine eligibility for the treatment, patients must undergo a specific evaluation process in consultation with a physician, which includes receiving a specialized PET scan to confirm the suitability of PLUVICTO as a treatment.

“We’re excited to offer this treatment through LHSC’s Molecular Imaging and Theranostics team as a standard of care to eligible patients,” said Dr. David Laidley, a nuclear medicine physician with London Health Sciences Centre. “This area of care is growing exponentially and we are well-positioned to drive forward new innovations to treat and eventually cure patients.”



(Ontario government news release, January 2025)

PCS Toronto Announces Interesting Slate of 2025 Awareness Night Speakers

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, PCS Toronto has offered its bimonthly Awareness Nights entirely through Zoom to accommodate as large an audience as possible. But the speakers are as informative and interesting as they were during the Edwards Gardens days. And who needs the parking hassle?

Your PCS Toronto board has finalized this year's slate. If any of these topics look especially compelling to you, be sure to mark the date. Go to www.pcstoronto.ca and click on Awareness Nights for instructions on how to join. Videos of our previous speakers are also available on the website. It's a huge treasure trove of information. All events run from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Jan. 28	Dr. Urban Emmenegger, Sunnybrook Hospital	Androgen deprivation therapy (ADT)
March 25	Dr. Robert Nam, Sunnybrook	Nanoknife
May 27	Dr. Amanda Hird, Sunnybrook	Robotic prostatectomy
July 29	Christina Dzieduszycki, Knew Life Pelvic Health, Ancaster, Ont.	Pelvic floor physiotherapy
Sept. 30	Daniel Santa Mina, University of Toronto	Exercise for cancer patients
Nov. 25	Dr. Hannah Nette, InspireHealth, Vancouver	How to improve your quality of life during cancer treatment