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Public Employee Press

"Man-to-Man" Group Discusses Prostate Cancer

By MOLLY CHARBONEAU

The first meeting of a new "Man to Man" prostate cancer support group was held on April 9 at District Council 37. Sponsored jointly with the American Cancer Society, the support group will continue to meet monthly at union headquarters (see schedule below).

The aim of the "Man to Man" program is to provide confidential education and a supportive environment for prostate cancer survivors, their partners, loved ones and family members.

Nick Navarino, a trained "Man to Man" facilitator and prostate cancer survivor, shared his experiences at the first meeting. When he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1992, he thought surgery was his only option. But his wife wanted to explore other possibilities.

"She began to investigate — every doctor, every source, every experiment, every treatment — and she made up a simple chart," Mr. Navarino said.

"I began to listen to her, took control of my destiny and my own program, and decided on radioactive seed implantation supplemented with external beam radiation," Mr. Navarino said.

Mr. Navarino said his wife's involvement shows the importance of turning to family and loved ones for support.

"It's the women who get us to the doctors. They make sure we do what we're supposed to and try to be supportive," he said. "So it's important to bring wives and other loved ones to these prostate cancer support group meetings."

Mr. Navarino, whose father died with prostate cancer, emphasized that he had "no war stories" about his own treatment. Early diagnosis, which was not available in his father's day, meant his cancer could be treated promptly before it could spread.

African-American rates are higher.

"Early detection is especially important for African-American men because their prostate cancer incidence rate is about 60 percent higher than that of Caucasian men," he pointed out.

"This means accessing the medical opportunities available to us before signs and symptoms appear."

Doctors, insurance providers and other medical experts will be invited to speak at future "Man to Man" meetings, so members can get the information they need on prostate cancer screening and treatment, said DC 37 Health and Nutrition Committee Chair Michelle Keller.

Members who are interested in attending the "Man to Man" sessions should contact Michelle Keller at (212) 815-1375. The support group will meet at DC 37 from 6-8 p.m. on May 9, June 11, July 9, Aug. 13, Sep. 10, Oct. 10, Nov. 12 and Dec. 10.

Do you know the facts about prostate cancer?

- 198,100 new cases are expected in the U.S. in 2001.
- African-American men have the world's highest incidence rate.
- Incidence of prostate cancer increases with age.
- 70 percent of cases are diagnosed in men over age 65.
- Dietary fat and family predisposition are risk factors.
- A yearly prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test and digital rectal exam are recommended after age 50 (or age 45 for African-American men and those with risk factors).

For more information, contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or go to www.cancer.org on the Internet.