

Alternative Medicine in Men's Health Care

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# Townsend Letter

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## Integrative Medicine Perspective by Dr. Julie

by Julie T. Chen, MD  
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### Tools for Fighting Prostate Cancer

Whenever I discuss prostate cancer with the men in my clinic, the perception of this disease widely varies from extensive fear to, surprisingly, almost ambivalence. Some men are extremely uncomfortable with the mention of it. Others think it's no big deal because "don't most men get it eventually anyway?" But all of these men agree that if there is any way for them to prevent it or at least make the stage of the disease more benign if they got prostate cancer or postpone the onset of disease until they are significantly older, they would be happy to take a supplement or change their lifestyle for that.

My patients are correct in that the prevalence of prostate cancer is higher with increasing age. However, as with any other cancer, lifestyle changes and nutrition may have significant impact on disease onset and progression. As with any other cancer, avoidance is key and early detection is imperative. Fortunately, since prostate cancer affects so many lives, we have somewhat more clinical data to help guide us in our quest of avoidance and early detection.

I have a patient in my clinic who is a 57-year-old man with a family history of prostate cancer in his father and grandfather in their mid-60s. He is very concerned about prostate cancer and, because of this, he had been taking supplements for "cancer prevention."

He was on a multivitamin, extra calcium citrate at 1200 mg per day since he is lactose intolerant, vitamin D3 at 10,000 IU per day, and d-alpha-tocopherol of 400 IU per day since he heard that vitamin E was a good antioxidant. He came to see me because he wanted help with his supplements, and with weight loss because he had read that being overweight worsened cancer risks. I applauded him in his proactive role in his health and we set out to help him achieve his goals.

My first task was to address his diet. He kept a nutrition log for me over the course of several months, and as we fine-tuned his diet toward a plant-based anti-inflammatory

diet, he began to lose weight at about 5 pounds per week at the beginning and then down to about 2 to 3 pounds per week in the last few months before he hit his target weight.

He learned to cut out refined sugar and eat more vegetables and fruits to lower the glycemic load in his diet. He ate nuts and fish for healthful fats and protein through these and legumes. He stopped drinking soda and coffee and started drinking green tea and oolong tea.

Whenever he had a sweet craving, he either used stevia in his tea or ate frozen berries drizzled with a small amount of dark chocolate. He also used agave nectar for his tea or whole wheat pancakes. We incorporated about 2 servings of soy along with freshly ground flaxseed daily for his intake of phytoestrogen in the soy and lignans of the flaxseed to help with prostate cancer risk prevention.

While the first task took well over 10 to 12 months to achieve his goals of weight loss, the other task of optimizing his supplemental regimen moved faster. I gave him a lab slip at the first visit for testing of vitamin and hormonal levels, including his thyroid and testosterone. We also had him get a digital rectal exam by his primary care doctor and a baseline prostate PSA level, both of which were normal.

I asked him to stop taking the synthetic vitamin E, since studies showed that synthetic vitamin E dosing of 400 IU or more per day had potential association with overall increased mortality and morbidity. Since he had no issues of macular degeneration or significant eye disease history in his family, after discussion, he opted not to take vitamin E.

I also had a discussion with him about his calcium intake and his vitamin D intake. He had not gotten his levels checked in a while. So when his levels came back high normal for calcium and D level at 70, I discussed with him about implications of his labs and these two vitamins. In studies that looked at vitamin D for men, levels of around 50 were ideal for men and, unlike women, in whom it

seemed that the high normal ranges were ideal, men were better at a D level of 40 to 50. There was concern that higher levels of D were potentially associated with prostate cancer. The same was true with potentially higher levels of calcium intake in men. Since his parathyroid hormone level and calcium were normal, I had the patient change his calcium intake to about 1000 mg per day total between his multivitamin and his separate calcium citrate.

As we discussed further his supplements, we decided that he would get majority of his flavonoids and antioxidants from his foods. Both he and I agreed that food as medicine was the best way to go for his combined goal of weight loss and cancer prevention. However, he wanted a few supplements to aid in the process. I chose curcumin with black pepper, resveratrol, fish oil, and indole-3-carbinol for him at appropriate dosages. He would use foods for fiber and phytonutrients.

With this regimen in place and a healthful weight loss plan that got him to his goal weight, he is well on his way to staying healthy. Even though genes play a significant part in health, the environment surrounding those genes also will affect their expression.

By providing a nutrient-rich environment via food and supplements and incorporating rest, relaxation, and exercise into daily life, the body's ability to fight the negative genes in their expression is improved. In this

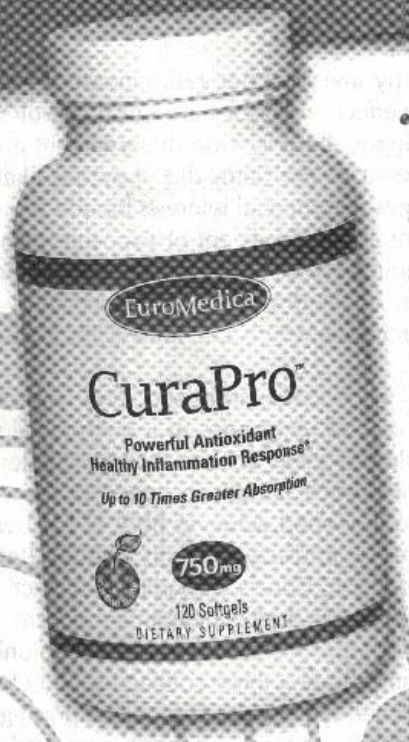
instance, the patient's regimen, diet, and ability to maintain a healthy weight has kept him healthy thus far ... and we are hoping that his body will continue to support us in this endeavor while he provides it with all the tools that it needs to function as an optimal machine of healing and wellness.

#### References

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