

Non-Surgical Advanced Technology To Treat Prostate Cancer

Instead of being plunged into anxiety when he was diagnosed with stage 2 prostate cancer, Mr Tan Kee Liong decided on a measured approach by seeking medically sound information about his condition and getting it treated

Mr Tan Kee Liong, 59, understands the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. An engineer by training, he enjoys outdoor activities like jogging, hiking, and swimming, and also likes listening to music, taking part in drumming sessions and singing karaoke. While he enjoys a steak once in a while, he mostly watches his diet as he has high cholesterol.

He also goes for regular health checks, but until recently, had not had a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test done. The PSA test is a blood test used primarily to screen for prostate cancer.

In December 2019, when Mr Tan decided to add the PSA test to his health screening, he did not expect the results to show a reading that was higher than the acceptable range.

“However, my regular doctor pointed out that there could be other reasons causing the higher reading,” Mr Tan said, and he was prescribed antibiotics for two weeks before repeating the PSA test. The reading came back even higher, so Mr Tan went for further checks, which included MRI scans of the prostate. The scans indicated swelling of some nodules in the prostate and a

prostate biopsy test in September last year confirmed he had a cancerous tumour.

Instead of feeling defeated, Mr Tan embarked on a quest to learn more about his condition and the treatment options recommended by his specialist doctors.

While searching on the Internet, he came across news articles about focal therapy, a non-surgical procedure



After doing research on the Internet about his condition, Mr Tan came across news articles about focal therapy for his prostate cancer. PHOTO: SURGI-TEN SPECIALISTS

Focal Therapy for Prostate Cancer

A Day-Surgery Treatment Backed by Technology

Dr. Chong Kian Tai, Consultant Urologist, Surgi-TEN Specialists



Photo: Farrer Park Hospital

Focal therapy for prostate cancer in Singapore uses high intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) by directing ultrasound waves to treat the cancerous areas within the prostate, while at the same time, preserving the healthy parts of the prostate.

HIFU treatment for prostate cancer has been available for more than 20 years, and with technological advancements in newer machines, this treatment for early prostate cancer becomes more effective resulting in better outcome.

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Day-Surgery Procedure

Focal therapy using Focal One HIFU machine is a day-surgery procedure that is performed by certified and experienced urologists. It is done under general anesthesia and lasts between 30 minutes and 2 hours, depending on the areas and amount of prostate cancer. There are no surgical cuts or radiation during the procedure. Many patients can even go home on the same day.

“After treatment, most patients will have a bit of discomfort when they pass urine, and some blood in the urine due to the treatment’s effects. But generally, most patients will recover after 2 to 4 weeks,” Dr. Chong explained.



Photo: Farrer Park Hospital

Treatment Outcome

According to medium-term studies, 80 to 90 percent of recovered patients remain cancer-free in the next 5 years. More than 95 percent of patients also do not have

urine incontinence after the treatment. For the minority of patients who relapses, focal therapy can be repeated in selected patients, or they may opt for surgery or radiotherapy.

Considerations about Focal Therapy for Prostate Cancer

Important factors to consider before focal therapy are: prostate cancer stage, area and volume of tumour. It is usually more suitable for Stage 1 and Stage 2 prostate cancer that is still within the prostate for better treatment outcome.

“Whether it is active surveillance, robotic surgery, radiotherapy or focal therapy, discuss how to treat your early-stage prostate cancer with your specialist first,” Dr. Chong advised.

which does not remove the entire prostate but targets and selectively destroys cancerous tissue within the prostate by using High Intensity Focus Ultrasound (HIFU).

As the articles also mentioned Dr Chong Kian Tai, a consultant urologist of Surgi-TEN Specialists at Farrer Park Hospital, Mr Tan decided to consult him.

Dr Chong says: “The majority of our patients with prostate cancer do not show symptoms and they feel perfectly fine. They may not have any urine problems, nor do they have blood in the urine. That was how Mr Tan was when I saw him at the clinic.”

After discussing focal therapy with Dr Chong, Mr Tan decided to go for the procedure at the end of October 2020.

Dr Chong says, “HIFU treatment for prostate cancer does not cause men to leak urine.” A multicentre research study from the United Kingdom with a five-year outcome was published

in 2018 in the prestigious European Urology medical journal. Their results showed that 98% of patients achieved complete urine control.

Mr Tan was determined to make sure he was fit enough to undergo the procedure and to ensure a speedy recovery after that, so he stepped up his exercise routine and watched his diet even more carefully.

Five months have since passed after Mr Tan received focal therapy, and he is feeling fine and has gone back to his normal routine.

He has to follow-up with a PSA test every three months as part of treatment monitoring.

Mr Tan says: “For cancer patients like me, aiming for remission is certainly a key priority. With new medical technologies, early detection and treatment, I am optimistic of a positive outcome. I look forward to that day when I am completely in remission.”



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