A MAN'S CANCER

PROSTATE CANCER REQUIRES INDIVIDUALIZED TREATMENT AND PATIENCE

Ralph Iverson had heard of prostate cancer, but it wasn't on his mind when he visited Urologist Howard Minott, MD, in July 2008. He was just there to see if anything could be done about his frequent urination at night. Before leaving the office, the 82-year-old Ravenna resident was encouraged to have a PSA blood test, a screening for prostate cancer. Iverson's elevated serum PSA level prompted Dr. Minott to order further testing, including multiple prostate biopsies resulting in the diagnosis of prostate cancer. Prostate cancer was the third highest malignancy found at Robinson Memorial Hospital in 2008.

"I didn't think anything of it until I heard I had three spots," Iverson said. "He told me he would take care of it. It kind of worried me. I didn't expect anything like that."

Between Jan. 1, 2008, and Dec. 31, 2008, the Cancer Registry at Robinson Memorial Hospital began tracking 315 new patients with cancer, including 35 with prostate cancer.

Physicians treated most of the patients with prostate cancer with radiation therapy or combined radiation therapy and hormones. In 25 percent of the cases, physicians and patients chose to monitor the tumor over time, a method called "watchful waiting." Because prostate cancer usually strikes later in life and is slow-growing, it may not be necessary for all patients to receive aggressive treatment.

When thinking about his options, Iverson had one thing to say, "I wanted it out." He still looks forward to years of helping his daughter, Ruth, in the garden, reading in the evening and watching the Indians, Browns and Cavs on TV.

Dr. Minott agrees with this treatment decision for most of his patients with prostate cancer.

"You have to individualize things and look at the person and their total health," Dr. Minott said. "We look at the patient's likely five-year survival and modify the patient treatment protocols accordingly. Then we decide how aggressively to treat the cancer. I don't like to look at ages. I like to look at someone's physiological makeup instead of age."

Dr. Minott referred Iverson to Radiation Oncologist Mitchel Fromm, MD, who would design and carry out Iverson's radiation treatment plan. Like 56 percent of men diagnosed with prostate cancer at Robinson Memorial Hospital in 2008, Iverson underwent radiation therapy. His treatment lasted approximately eight weeks at the Robinson Radiation Oncology Center in Ravenna. Seven months later, Iverson's PSA level was nearly undetectable, indicating an excellent response to treatment.

"[Prostate cancer] was the last thing I expected to hear," Iverson said. "But I have peace of mind now."

Dr. Minott will continue to monitor Iverson with semiannual PSA testing and a physical exam every year.

Prostate cancer may not always have symptoms before it is found. For more information, visit the National Cancer Institute at cancer.gov. Complete cancer data from Robinson Memorial Hospital gathered in 2008 and five-year survival rates for the hospital when compared to state and national figures is available at www.robinsonmemorial.org. For more information on the topics in this article, call (330) 297-2581 or visit us online.

Ralph Iverson, center, had an excellent outcome after treatment for prostate cancer. He stands with his doctors Radiation Oncologist Mitchel Fromm, MD, and Urologist Howard Minott, MD.