

# Opinion

Friday, December 18, 1992  
The Kansas City Star

C-7

## VIEWPOINT

# Early detection is imperative in surviving prostate cancer

**Few realize this disease is the No. 2 leading male cancer killer, exceeded only by lung cancer.**

By BOB DOLE

A man approached me in a hotel lobby in Houston this summer. He told me he had seen me on the "Larry King Show," talking about my experience with prostate cancer and the value of early cancer detection.

That television appearance had encouraged him to get a check-up, after which his doctor diagnosed him with prostate cancer. The cancer was caught early, the man said, enabling successful treatment. The man concluded with words I will never forget: "Senator Dole, you saved my life."

The real life saver was early detection of this man's cancer.

One year ago today, I underwent three hours of surgery to remove my cancerous prostate gland. In the year since my operation, an estimated 34,000 men have died of prostate cancer. That's a startling statistic, comparable to the number of women killed each year by breast cancer, and the number of people who die each year of AIDS.

But the statistics about prostate cancer don't have to be so grim. Don't get me wrong, being told "you have cancer" can be a very frightening experience. It was for me. But, when it comes to cancer of the prostate, that fear can be tempered by the knowledge that

early detection greatly increases your chances for successful treatment. I'm one of many men who consider themselves living proof that early detection can mean a healthy future.

The good news last year was that doctors had detected my cancer very early, through a blood test known as PSA, or prostate specific antigen, followed by a biopsy. After reviewing treatment options, which ranged from radiation to surgery, I selected surgery. (The surgery was performed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where I was eligible for treatment due to my World War II military service. My treatment was paid for by private insurance, not tax dollars.)

Tests immediately following my surgery showed that the cancer had not spread beyond the prostate, and one year later my doctors tell me I remain cancer-free. That doesn't mean recovery is easy — many patients do suffer side-effects including incontinence and impotence. For me, it's been an active and virtually trouble-free recovery year, in the Senate and on the campaign trail.

I used to be like most men, barely aware I even had a prostate, much less aware it could develop into a life-threatening problem.

Perhaps the most stunning fact I learned in the past year is that prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer among men. It is the second leading

cancer killer of men, exceeded only by lung cancer. Prostate cancer will afflict one out of every 11 American males, and one out of every three men over the age of 50.

I was surprised to learn that the federal government devoted just \$28 million per year to prostate cancer research, compared to billions of dollars earmarked for essential research into other diseases. With the help of Senators Ted Stevens, Jesse Helms and Alan Cranston — all of whom have been treated for prostate cancer — we were able to boost this year's funding for prostate cancer research by a third. However, we still have a long way to go to help our scientists research this insidious killer.

But the key is still early detection. With recent advances in diagnostic and treatment techniques and technology, early detection — and successful treatment — are becoming more and more common. Prostate problems can be detected with the standard digital rectal exam, with ultrasound testing, with the PSA blood test or with a combination of these tests.

Throughout my recovery, I have spoken personally with thousands of men from all walks of life who have contacted me with concerns about prostate cancer.

I don't know the name of that man from Houston, but I do know his message to men would be the same as mine: Please get routine check-ups and don't neglect to have your doctor check for prostate disease.

*Republican Bob Dole is a U.S. Senator from Kansas.*