

# Patient Advocate Corner

## Us TOO Network: Helping Patients and Caregivers Cope With Prostate Cancer

By Thomas N. Kirk

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men after skin cancer. In fact, each year slightly more men are diagnosed with prostate cancer than women are diagnosed with breast cancer.

Impressed by the power of peer support sparked by Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization, founded in 1990, patients with prostate cancer formed their own organization, Us TOO, to raise awareness, inform, and create a support network for others living with the disease. The Us TOO International and Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network has grown to an active network of volunteers in 325 support group chapters in the United States and around the world.

Us TOO volunteers reach thousands of men and their families each month through the chapter network, discussion groups, publications, and presentations. Us TOO helps men and their families learn more about prostate cancer, so they can weigh treatment options and make better decisions, communicate effectively with their doctors and health care professionals, be active members of their health care team, and cope with emotional and quality-of-life issues after treatment.

*"I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and became confused and depressed. After I attended a local Us TOO support group meeting, I learned that I was not alone. I am stronger and have hope because of Us TOO." — Marvin*

### Us TOO Programs and Services

Us TOO offers a variety of programs and services, recognizing that people have different needs at different times when living with prostate cancer. Us TOO's core program and support services include:

- Comprehensive, educational Web site for patients as well as physicians and other health care professionals who treat men with prostate cancer (site receives more than 4 million visitors each year)
- Monthly newsletter, *Hot Sheet*

- E-newsletter, *News You Can Use* ([www.ustoo.org/Prostate\\_Cancer\\_News.asp](http://www.ustoo.org/Prostate_Cancer_News.asp))
- Toll-free patient helpline and referral to volunteers for one-on-one support
- Online topic-specific discussion communities ([www.ustoo.org/Prostate\\_Pointers.asp](http://www.ustoo.org/Prostate_Pointers.asp))
- Educational publications and materials
- Resource kits for newly diagnosed patients as well as for patients with recurring disease and their families
- Patient education and volunteer training programs
- Minority and underserved populations outreach program (in 3 years, it has reached more than 118,000)
- Workplace and community awareness programs
- Conferences and public policy advocacy efforts

### Growing Need

Prostate cancer touches hundreds of thousands of lives every year. From the patient to the family, the community to the medical professionals, prostate cancer is one of the major pressing health concerns of our time. Just as baby boomers have defined nearly every trend since 1946, they also are facing prostate cancer in rapidly growing and unprecedented numbers. Us TOO International is here to meet the needs of those at risk for prostate cancer now and in the years ahead.

### The Bottom Line

*"I was in a state of shock and disbelief when my PSA rose to 8.6 after I had my prostate removed. A meeting of Us TOO put me back on Earth when I learned that it happens to many men. The group then offered information on a variety of options, and I felt alive again." — Les*

For more information about Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network, visit [www.ustoo.org](http://www.ustoo.org) or contact us at (630) 795-1002. Call (800) 808-7866 to reach our patient helpline.

*Thomas N. Kirk is president and chief executive officer of Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network in Downers Grove, Illinois.*

DOI: 10.1200/JOP.0755002