



PCRI Insights

New Developments In Prostate Cancer Treatment Patient & Physician In-Go Partnership

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Sep. 7th

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Lunch with Ryan O’Neal and Duke Bahn, MD

By Mark Scholz, MD



Last month Dr. Duke Bahn invited me to meet him for lunch on the Malibu coast to interview Ryan O’Neal (Love Story, Paper Moon) and to discuss, of all things, focal cryotherapy. It was a beautiful summer day to be at an enjoyable restaurant off the Coast Highway overlooking the ocean. Mr. O’Neal underwent treatment for prostate cancer last year. His treatment turned out favorably so he generously offered to tell his story.

My social life is normally limited to everyday folks so I was naturally curious about meeting Mr. O’Neal. When I arrived at the restaurant, he was already seated in the waiting area. He sprang to his feet offering a warm smile and handshake. We made our way to the table where Dr. Bahn and Ryan’s friend, Greg Hodal, joined us.

Since this is my first celebrity interview, I started timidly, “What’s your daily life like?” Ryan responded, “Well, I live right down the road. Enjoy paddle tennis. Still do some acting. I play the part of the father of Dr. Brennan in the TV show Bones. I’m committed to exercise. Try to ride my stationary bike every day. Actually, I own Pro Gym in Brentwood. Make it over there to work out a couple times a week.”

Ryan was diagnosed with stage T2b (medium sized nodule) and Gleason Grade 7 (intermediate grade) prostate cancer in 2012 when his doctor felt an abnormality on digital rectal examination. “My oncologist, Dr. Piro, was very reassuring and calmed me down. He referred me to Dr. Bahn in Ventura for a prostate scan. The scan showed a distinct nodule contained within the gland (see figure 1). After my scan, I sat down in Dr. Bahn’s office and we reviewed a whole list of treatment options including surgery, beam radiation, radioactive seeds and targeted cryotherapy. I was particularly attracted to the cryotherapy option because of the reduced risk of side effects.”

I asked Dr. Bahn, “What kind of side effects have you been seeing in your patients treated with focal cryotherapy?” He replied, “In the first 100 men, there has been zero incontinence and about ten percent impotence.”

Then, returning to Ryan, I asked, “Were there any other bad effects?” He smiled and said, “I was sore between my legs for a day. I had a catheter for a week so attending a party wasn’t so fun. Got my attention when the urologist pulled it out, but overall I did great. I never needed any pain-killers. I haven’t had any residual effects.”

Mr. O’Neal related that he had faced the diagnosis of serious cancer before. When he was sixty, twelve years ago, he was diagnosed with Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia (CML). “Back then they just came out with a new miracle pill called Gleevec. It put me in complete remission. I faithfully take the pill to this day.”

Ryan was very curious about the controversy surrounding PSA screening and posed a number of insightful questions. Before the meeting I was expecting a jaded Hollywood road warrior. As it turns out, Ryan is extremely personable, a delightfully engaging conversationalist. He was very attentive, asking incisive questions of Dr. Bahn and me about the PCRI and the prostate cancer world in general. While Ryan ate Ahi tuna and I nibbled on Chilean sea bass we covered a wide variety of important themes including the overtreatment of innocuous prostate cancer, the five shades of prostate cancer and the modern potential for reducing side effects using focal therapy, now that scanning technology has been improved.

I asked Ryan how he could afford time away from his busy lifestyle to address a mundane subject like prostate cancer. “I feel very fortunate that my treatment has turned out so well. This is actually my

third go round with cancer. I had Moh’s treatment to remove skin cancer. All along I have been privileged with skilled doctors using innovative medical technology. If there is anything I can do to help increase awareness, I need to do it.”

At that point both Dr. Bahn and I interrupted him at the same time. “Well.... there is this prostate cancer conference coming up this September. Any chance you could come?” Ryan smiled, “Sure, I’d be happy to come and share. Maybe we can get the LA Times to come and do a story.”

Driving back on the Coast Highway from Malibu to my office in Marina del Rey I was reflecting on Ryan’s playful charm and how he kept steering the conversation back toward Dr. Bahn’s and my comfort zone, the topic of prostate cancer. We all had a great time. No wonder people’s ears perk up when they hear the name—Ryan O’Neal. □

Figure 1

Mr. O’Neal’s Cancer on Color Doppler Ultrasound:

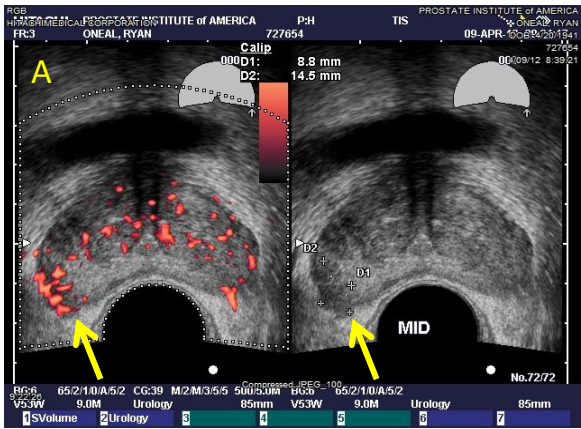


Image A: Vascular (red) Prostate Cancer seen at Yellow Arrow

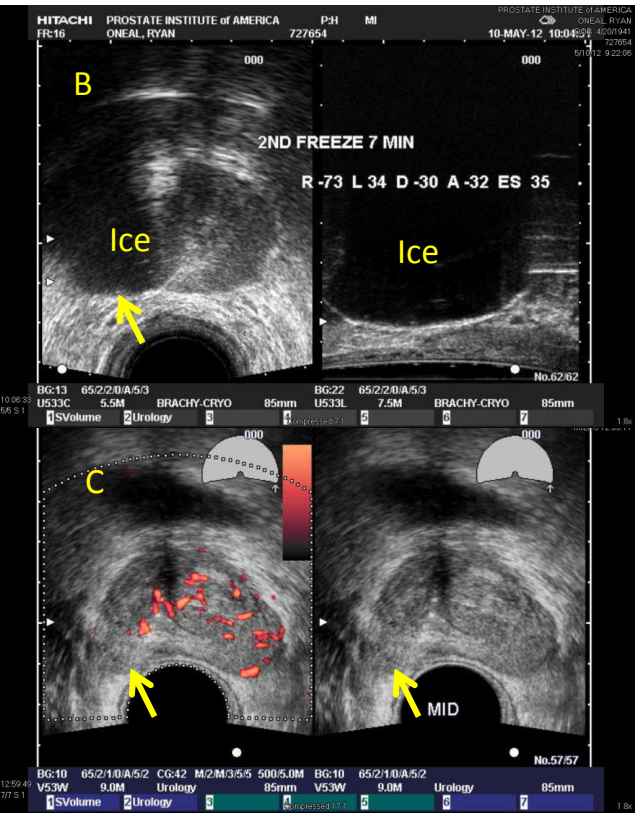


Image B: Cryoablation: Dark area is Ice Formation to kill the cancer at Arrow

Image C: 14 months after Cryo: The right lobe is deformed and shrunken (Arrow). The cancer has disappeared. No blood flow (red) is detected. PSA 0.7