The Star - October 2006 Consultant oncologist Dr G. SELVARATNAM looks at the top 10 questions asked by men about prostate cancer. NUMBER 10 How common is prostate cancer among men in Malaysia? According to the National Cancer Research (NCR), the top six cancers in males in Malaysia are: 1. Lung 13.8% 2. Nasopharynx 8.8% 3. Colon 7.6% 4. Leukaemia 7.1% 5. Rectum 6.6% 6. Prostate 6.4% Number 9 What is the survival rate of prostate cancer? The probability of cure is extremely high if prostate cancer is diagnosed early Number 8 What are the symptoms of prostate cancer? In the early stages, there are usually no symptoms but when the growth becomes more advanced, the symptoms may include: Difficulty urinating Painful urination Blood in the urine and semen Bone pain Paralysis Kidney failure Other possible diagnoses with almost similar symptoms are urinary tract infection, benign prostatic hyperplasia (enlargement of the prostate) and urinary stones. Hence, screening is important to determine whether you are suffering from prostate cancer or otherwise. Number 7 What causes prostate cancer? Studies have not determined the exact causes of prostate cancer. However some risk factors have been identified, which include environment, genetics and family history. Some examples include: Environment High fat diet Family history One affected first degree relative = 2x risk (For example: father affected, son has 2x risk of being affected) Two affected first degree relative = 5x risk (For example: father and brother affected, the other son has 5x risk of being affected) Three affected first degree relatives = 11x risk (For example: father, uncle and brother affected, the other son has 11x risk of being affected) Those who are at higher risk are: Men 50 years old and above If you are more than 40 years old and your 1st degree relative has prostate cancer Number 6 How is prostate cancer detected? There are several tests that need to be done to confirm the diagnosis and to stage the disease. The doctor may proceed with one or more of the following tests: Digital Rectal Examination (DRE) This is usually the first step in diagnosing prostate cancer. Using a gloved finger to examine the rectum, the doctor may be able to feel a hard lump or growth in the prostate. The examination will take less than five minutes. Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) PSA is a substance produced by both normal and malignant prostate cells. The presence of elevated levels of PSA in the blood is another test that helps to detect prostate cancer. However, some men with benign prostatic hyperplasia or prostatitis (inflamed prostate) also have increased levels of PSA. Usually a biopsy of the prostate is recommended if there is a presence of PSA. In essence, the higher the PSA level, the risk of prostate cancer increases. Biopsy A biopsy is the removal of a sample tissue, which is then examined for cancerous changes. This is the only way to provide a confirmation of prostate cancer. If the biopsy is positive, a bone scan and/or computer scanning of the pelvis may be needed to help determine the extent of the cancer. Number 5 What are the treatment options available for prostate cancer? No treatment watchful

waiting&#65533; Not all men diagnosed with the disease require immediate treatment. Some cancer cells grow slowly and may take 10 years or more to cause problems or spread. The doctor will monitor his patient&#65533;s progress and provide regular examinations to check cancer growth by performing DRE and PSA tests.&#65533; Surgery&#65533; Surgery involves the complete removal of the prostate with a safe clear margin to prevent recurrence and progression. It is the recommended form of treatment only if the tumour is localised at the prostate.&#65533; Types of surgery include:&#65533; Radical retropubic prostatectomy&#65533; Radical perineal prostatectomy&#65533; Laparoscopic radical prostatectomy&#65533; Robotic prostatectomy&#65533; Radiation therapy&#65533; This procedure uses high-energy x-rays to kill cancer cells and shrink tumours. Radiation therapy is usually given in small doses spread out over time. This potentially allows the healthy cells to recover and survive, while the cancer cells eventually die. The procedure itself is painless and lasts for just a few minutes.&#65533; Radiotherapy can be used in early and advanced prostate cancer. Currently Intensity Modulated and Conformal radiotherapy have been used to treat prostate cancer successfully. Brachytherapy, such as high dose rate Iridium-92 and Iodine-125 implants, are other effective methods of treatment.&#65533; Hormonal therapy&#65533; Hormonal therapy is an effective method of treating prostate cancer. It can be used to treat early and advanced disease. The aim is to reduce the testosterone levels in the body or the binding of them to the prostate gland.&#65533; Chemotherapy&#65533; Chemotherapy is a drug treatment used to destroy cancer cells and is usually reserved for advanced disease. The drugs used for chemotherapy come in many different forms. While some are given directly into a vein or a muscle, others may be given orally.&#65533; Number 4&#65533; What is the latest treatment technology available in Malaysia?&#65533; &#65533; Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) is one of the latest and most advanced methods in prostate cancer treatment. IMRT uses thinner beams to precisely target the tumour and spare other nearby organs from radiation. Therefore, IMRT reduces side effects and burnt areas of a patient compared with more conventional methods.&#65533; It requires the Varian Radiotherapy System equipment to administer IMRT. The Varian Trilogy prioritises patient comfort and treatment efficacy. Patients would not feel pain and discomfort during the IMRT treatment. &#65533; Those treated using IMRT experience less chance of adverse effects and greater chance for recovery and success than conventional methods.&#65533; {mosimage} Number 3&#65533; What is the function of the prostate gland?&#65533; &#65533; The prostate is located at the base of the bladder surrounding the first part of the urethra, which carries urine from the bladder. In Malaysia, prostate cancer is the 6th most common cancer among males overall. The rate increases sharply with age and is highest in the oldest age group.&#65533; Prostate cancer is a malignant tumour within the prostate gland and can spread beyond the prostate to other parts of the body.&#65533; The primary function of the prostate gland is to produce part of the fluid that makes up semen. During ejaculation, muscles in the prostate contract to push the prostatic fluid through tiny ducts into the urethra, where it mixes with sperm and other fluid. &#65533; Number 2&#65533; Will a man diagnosed with prostate cancer still be able to father a child?&#65533; &#65533; Many men who have been cured of prostate cancer can become fathers.&#65533; Number 1&#65533; Will treatment affect a patient&#65533;s sex life?&#65533; &#65533; It all depends. For some, once treatment is completed for early stage disease, most recover and are

able to have a normal sexual life.&#65533; For some men, the side-effects include impotence and urinary incontinence (the inability to control the bladder and bowels), which may be temporary for some but permanent for others.&#65533; Doctor&#65533;s advice: Early detection not only saves lives but in prostate cancer treatment, early detection and treatment may result in a normal sex life for the patient when he recovers.&#65533;