

My Prostate Cancer Journey: The Intimate Details Of My Diagnosis, Surgery, And Recovery

Gogs Gagnon

My name is Gogs Gagnon, and I was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2017 at the age of 57.

Before then, my PSA had been rising for the past five years. A previous prostate biopsy of four years ago was negative. However, this time around, an MRI identified a suspicious area that was then targeted by another [prostate biopsy that confirmed cancer](#).

My wife Mary and I were in the urologist's office when we got the news. Hearing the word "cancer" was a major shock, and I immediately thought my life was over. The doctor continued to talk, but everything for me sounded distorted, and I wasn't able to process the information. My mind raced with thoughts of how Mary and the kids would cope without me. My eyesight blurred and was on the verge of passing out.

The doctor informed us that he would set up a bone and CT scan to help determine if cancer had spread outside the prostate. He concluded by handing me a big stack of reading material and urged me to take my time with the decision and to speak with a

[radiation oncologist](#) and to seek multiple opinions.

Suddenly, I heard a voice in my head that shouted,

{you're not dead yet!

This message was enough for me to wake up from my brain fog, and I bombarded the doctor with several questions including;

“How long have you been a surgeon?”

"How many men have you treated?”

“How long is the recovery process?”

“How many suffer from permanent side effects?”

“What’s the risk of recurrence?”

In the back of my mind, I had already chosen surgery without even knowing my test results or considering other options.

Once again, the doctor reminded me to take my time with the decision. Besides, there were still more tests required, and it was simply too early to decide without having all the facts. Some of the things I needed to consider included all test results, age, general health, life expectancy, all available treatment options, risks, and all potential side effects.

On reflection, I realize that I was still in shock of hearing the diagnosis when I decided on surgery. I only thought about getting rid of it without knowing anything about it. What I needed at that

moment was emotional support to help me recover from the shock. I have since learned that while in shock, it's not a good idea to make decisions of any kind, — especially regarding treatments that may impact the quality of your life.



The doctor told us he would schedule me for surgery; however, he strongly encouraged us to read the material and seek a second option.

He assured us that we could cancel the surgery anytime if I changed my mind. With that news, we thanked him, and Mary and I left the office holding hands. While walking to the car, Mary whispered in my ear,

(Don't worry, I'm here for you,

and then kissed me on the neck. Her gesture was heartwarming and precisely what I needed to help ease my mind from worry.

Mary is my rock and continued to [provide me with the emotional](#)

[support that I so desperately needed at that time.](#)

Over the next few weeks, Mary encouraged me to open up and speak about my feelings.

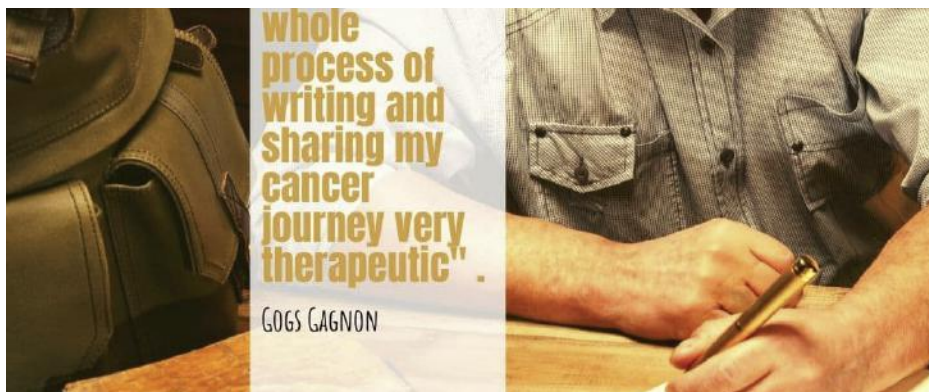
At first, I found it very difficult, but soon realized that it was incredibly therapeutic and helpful to talk about it. The more we talked, the less alone I felt, and the more I realized that I was still very much alive and had a crucial role to play in my future.

I started to write a journal and became obsessed with researching and must have read at least a couple dozen books on [prostate cancer](#) — mostly written by doctors, and a few written by patients. I spent countless hours on the computer, searching and reading everything I could find. I joined many online [support groups and spoke with other cancer survivors and patients living with cancer.](#)

However, in all the time invested in research, I mostly focused on surgery.

Without realizing it, I had already decided on my treatment option from the moment I heard the [word “cancer.” Sometimes we tend to blind ourselves by being too focused on what we think](#) is right, without taking enough time to look at other options. I should have kept an open mind to explore other possibilities. Ideally, logic should drive decisions, not necessarily emotion.





But my mind was made up, and I opted for surgery. The results of the bone and CT scan indicated no evidence cancer had spread outside the prostate. The next steps included a visit with the [hospital admission](#) nurse and anesthesiologist. Afterwards, I had some blood work, an echocardiogram, x-rays, and given a surgery date. Once again, Mary was by my side every step of the way. I wouldn't have fared as well without her constant love and support.

The surgery was a success and went without complication.

It turns out that my [cancer was in the final stage before beaching the prostate](#) and was the largest the surgeon had ever seen. My prostate was the size of 4 1/2 golf balls, and two golf balls were cancer with a Gleason score of 4+3=7. I was in the hospital for two nights and had a catheter for two weeks. Overall, my recovery was quick and painless. However, even though my surgery was successful, and I'm not suffering from any long-term side effects,

I'm not happy with how I made the decision. It's also important to recognize that each case is different, and not everyone will experience the same outcomes. What might work for one, may not work for another.

During my recovery, several friends, family members and coworkers reached out to provide support and asked how I was doing.

I decided to share my journal as a daily private blog and was overwhelmed by the response. They encouraged me to keep writing. I found the whole process of writing and sharing my [journey](#) very therapeutic and a big part of my emotional healing.

Therefore, I decided to write a book that shares all of the intimate details of my diagnosis, surgery, and recovery. It captures what it was like and how it felt every step of the way, including what I should have done differently, and the side-effects that I experienced. My hope is [the book](#) will serve as a guide to those facing prostate cancer themselves, or are just curious about the disease.



A native of New Westminster, Gogs Gagnon followed an early passion for computers by becoming a programmer and

independent technology consultant. In the course of his career, he has developed software for Apple, IBM, and the government of British Columbia, where he was the lead programmer analyst and data architect.

Now, in addition to promoting prostate cancer awareness, Gogs devotes much of his time to writing. His next book is a coming-of-age memoir set in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia during the 1970s.

The father of three children, Gogs lives with his wife and their two dogs in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, BC.

Further reading

[Helping A Friend With Cancer: What You Need to Know](#)

[Moving Beyond the Fear: Learning to be Part of the Cancer Community](#)

[Find Prostate Cancer Care Hampers](#)

[As long as you have books, you're never alone](#)

[Five Gifts Not To Buy A Cancer Patient: From Beanies To Spa Treatments](#)

[How To Support Someone Going Through Chemo: Easy and Not So Easy Tips](#)