

O Colorectal Cancer, how cruel!

By **Dincy Lim**
Founder of CCSG
(Since 2004)

I came away from visiting Ester at the Assisi's Hospice. She was 42, the youngest member of Colon Cancer Support Group. Only in last December we were together feasting, and she looked good, but now.....

Uncontrollably, tears were streaming down my cheeks. I whispered a prayer.

Colorectal cancer is so common, topping the list of cancer killers! The best way out is regular routine screenings. I prefer colonoscopy whereby a specialist insert a flexible tube with a telescope at the end, through the anus and passing along the large intestines to detect any abnormality. Early detection of a cancer tumor and its subsequent intervention can result in a cure.

In our Support Group we share the importance of a healthy lifestyle to keep cancer at bay. The success of our combat is to know and to thwart our enemy's strategy. Cancer cells were once our normal cells which turn awry. They live a long life in conducive conditions. They impair the efficiency of our immune system. They deceive and kill. They proliferate and ferment profusely with sugar increasing their core temperature to 40 degree centigrade.

But they cannot thrive in these conditions:

- aerobic(oxygen)
- alkaline PH balance
- high enzyme level
- abundant in-take of cruciferous vegetables and colourful fruits

Our weapons of prevention are what we eat and do. We use the self analysis code – SEEDS - as a check list of our lifestyle.

1) Sleep six to eight hours at night.

Be mindful of the 3-4am sleep, our IMMUNE BOOSTING HOURS. Repeatedly without it, our immune systems crash. Weakened immune response is cancer cells playground. Take restorative naps during the day as dictated by our body. Merely lying down or resting is beneficial too.

2) Eat right, preferably, our blood type nutrition.

All food has protein lectins. The wrong type lectins get into the body can play havoc to our guts, compromising guts permeability. Thus toxins, chemicals, bacteria, virus, fungi, parasites get into our blood streams and cause diseases. Our large intestine is the seat of our immune system. We must keep it in tip top condition by ingesting comforting food.

Our food is categorised into proteins, carbohydrates, fats, veggies and fruits, herbs and condiments. Our daily diet should have a portion of each. Nurture a good habit of eating colourful fruits and salads. (Wash them well before eating them.) They give us ENZYME (which is destroyed if cooked) to aid digestion and to help kill cancer cells. They keep our body in alkaline PH balance environment. An acid environment is cancer cells' nest.

Go slow with carbohydrates. Their end product is sugar which

creates an acid medium for cancer cells to ferment and grow. Studies have found that cruciferous vegetables which contain sulphur compound that destroys cancer cells. They are watercress (best eaten as a salad); three types of flower: broccoli, cauliflower, kalia; and three types of cabbage: white, purple and Brussels sprouts.

Maintain healthy guts by keeping strong intestinal wall permeability. Build up a colony of good bacteria with fermenting food like natural yogurt and kim-chi and avoid the wrong kind of lectin proteins. Cook your favourite dishes with plenty of garlic, onion, ginger and turmeric.

3) Exercise

- Deep diaphragmatic breathings to take in OXYGEN which overpowers cancer cells.
- Pelvic floor Kegel exercise to contract and relax the muscular organs, bladder, vagina and the rectum. It is essential to patients with a stoma. The rectum needs to be activated regularly.
- Weight-bearing walking exercise for bone health.

4) Drink eight glasses of good alkaline water

A slice of lemon or a dash of lime makes the water alkaline. Copious green tea and one cup of coffee without sugar keep cells healthy.

5) Supplements

I believe in good multivitamins, extra vitamin C (1000mg), vitamin D3 (1000IU), extra virgin coconut oil and Omega3 krill oil. "To each his own" is my motto!

In addition, stress management plays a big role in our well-being. Stress is two-faced, good and bad, and is a challenge to our immune system. Good stress is positive, energetic, motivating, productive and under control, such as "I feel primed and enjoy tackling such activities at hand". The feeling that "I am overwhelmed" is bad and one must let go. Seek support, talk about it. Relax in nature's environment, write, laugh, hug or call a positive friend.

To me cancer is a warning that my immune system is at its lowest ebb. I need to make an inventory of my past lifestyle. I must be disciplined and make informed changes. I need to connect with the Colon Cancer Support Group at TTSH - a platform for colon cancer patients and their care-givers - to gather, share experiences, hold on to one another so "our dreams will never die"!

Can We Help You?

If you wish to know more about Colon Cancer Support Group, share your experiences or need someone to talk to, call our Colon Cancer (TTSH) hotline at 6357 8366 from Mon to Fri (except Wed), 3-5 pm.

We welcome all colorectal patients to Colon Cancer Support Group at TTSH. We gather at 2:30pm at TTSH, Level 1, every first Saturday of the month. Simply walk in... It's at the Conference Room 3, behind the florist.

Acknowledgement

We wish to thank the following companies for their support of the Colon Cancer Support Group:

- strangebutcool
- Anti-oxidant Centre Pte Ltd
- Nestle Health Science
- Pharmazen Medicals Pte Ltd
- Abbott Laboratories (Singapore) Pte Ltd
- My Type Store Pte Ltd
- Nuka Water Master



Tan Tock Seng
HOSPITAL



A Short History of
CCSG @ TTSH

I Survive
Colorectal Cancer

O Colorectal Cancer,
how cruel!

Edited by: Jessie Foo Designed by: CoCo Tan
MICA (P) 1006/01/2013

A Short History of CCSG

...A Group Of The Patient, By The Patient, For The Patient

@ TTSH

By **Dr Richard Sim**
Senior Consultant
Colorectal Service



L-R: Dincy, Dr Richard Sim, Rita, Rosalind, Siew Choo and Raymond

The CCSG@TTSH (Colon Cancer Support Group at Tan Tock Seng Hospital) was the first such group formed in Singapore 'of the patient, by the patient, for the patient'. As with other support groups, the main aim is to connect patients, family members and care-givers to empower them to become advocates for themselves and help them better cope with the diagnosis and treatment of the disease.

Doctors, nurses and other members of the health care team are often occupied with delivering optimal care to help those living with colorectal cancer maintain their normal lifestyles as much as possible. Meeting with a social worker can be helpful for those who want to talk about their feelings or discuss their concerns. Often, a social worker can suggest resources for financial aid, transportation, home-care, or give emotional support. There is also the Stoma Club under the auspices of the Singapore Cancer Society, which holds monthly educational talks and get-togethers for ostomates, many but not all of whom are colorectal cancer patients.

At CCSG@TTSH, all activities are initiated and organised by volunteers who are themselves colorectal cancer survivors, with health-care workers taking the back-seat to provide support, resources and advice, when required. Financial support is drawn from a fund raised from well-wishers towards cancer support groups at TTSH (which now include breast cancer and prostate cancer support groups.) It is also this fund that has allowed a modest resource library to be available to volunteers and members of the group.

CCSG@TTSH is modeled after 'Woman to Woman' Menopause Support Group at KK Women and Children's Hospital. I remember giving a talk on colon cancer screening to that group and was most impressed with their enthusiastic volunteerism. Mrs Dincy Lim, founder of 'Woman to Woman', was quick to agree in helping to organise a similar support group at TTSH dedicated to colorectal cancer patients. While brain-storming for a similar catchy name for the support group, we decided to simply use CCSG instead.

The initial core group of volunteers was quickly formed and given a crash course on colorectal cancer and counselling. They were all colorectal cancer survivors who were keen to give their time to share their victory stories and tips on coping. There were only two rules – their views should be secular and they should not recommend unproven remedies.

Monthly sharing meetings and a phone helpline were the central activities. Other ad hoc social activities and outings were also organised. As the volunteer group grew, face to face counselling at the outpatient clinics added timely support to patients receiving their diagnosis for the first time.

One particular problem we did not foresee was that when any of our volunteers had recurrence and died, they were not only hard to replace, but it was especially demoralising on the whole group. In such instances, we are reminded of the nature of colorectal cancer, which reinforces the purpose of the existence of CCSG. I pay tribute to our comrades who saw us through our salad days and in their memory, we shall keep CCSG@TTSH going even after we are gone.

I Survive Colorectal Cancer

By Ms Low Joo Lee

It has been more than 11 years since I was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Long before that, I had experienced tiredness and loss of appetite. However, doctors attributed these symptoms to depression. I did notice some bleeding but thought it was due to haemorrhoids, for it never occurred to me that I might have colorectal cancer.

I remember the day I felt as if I had diarrhoea and noticed some blood on the toilet floor. The doctor suspected that I might have a bleeding peptic ulcer and advised me to go to an A&E. I chose Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

After I was warded, I was examined by two doctors. One of them turned out to be a former student of mine, Dr Richard Sim, who told me that I probably had stage two colorectal cancer and that the tumour was about the size of a ten-cent coin. He scheduled the operation within a week.

About 25 cm (a foot long) of the colon, including a large part of my rectum, was removed. A sort of pouch was constructed from part of the remaining colon, so as to reduce the number of trips to the toilet. In order for the anastomosis to heal properly, I had to wear a stoma bag for about six months.

Colorectal cancer cells were found in one of the lymph nodes removed from the tissue near the rectum, indicating that I had early stage three cancer. Chemotherapy and radiotherapy were necessary and I was referred to the National Cancer Centre for the required treatment.

In 2004, I was introduced to the newly formed Tan Tock Seng Colon Cancer Support Group. In June that year we had our first meeting with a small group of about 15 volunteers, survivors, patients and their care-givers. Dr Sim inaugurated the event and Mrs Dincy Lim, as Chairperson, gave a warm welcome and encouragement.

It was decided that the Colon Cancer Support Group should meet every month. We were taught some simple qigong exercises and I've been doing it every morning. This is a wonderful exercise which involves deep breathing and makes me feel energized and uplifted.

The highlight of the meeting has to be the talks given by various professionals. Such talks have included, besides colon cancer, benefits of far-infra-red, negative ions and health supplements, etc. I have been taking some supplements and feel a sense of well-being.

Taking turns to share our stories on our determination to survive, our pain, our experiences help to strengthen the group spirit, which is especially comforting for those who are about to go for their first treatment. Recently, we have adopted Diana Ross' "If we hold on together" as our theme song which inspires much camaraderie and is very touching.

Now in my early 70s, I am a regular at the monthly meeting where I am happy to see the familiar faces, knowing they are well and alive. We have agreed among ourselves that the passing of our members should not be announced; as such news does nothing to benefit the group.

The road to survival is a difficult and lonely one for any cancer patient. Once diagnosed with cancer, the person will always be under a cloud even when in remission. Cancer patients need all the reassurances and encouragement from family and friends and people who have been through the journey. I hope that more colon cancer patients, especially those from Tan Tock Seng Hospital, will join our Colon Cancer Support Group, as we certainly benefit much from it.