



Aaron E. Katz, M.D.

Interview

A Holistic Approach to Prostate Treatment

An Interview with Aaron E. Katz, M.D.,
 Director-Center of Holistic Urology, Columbia University Medical Center

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Aaron Katz is the Carl A. Olsson Professor of Clinical Urology at Columbia University where he has been a faculty member since 1993. His book, *Dr. Katz's Guide to Prostate Health*, was published in 2005. He graduated from New York Medical College in 1986 and completed a six-year training program at the Maimonides Medical Center. Following the completion of his residency, Katz was awarded a Ferdinand C. Valentine Fellowship from The New York Academy of Medicine to further his studies in Urologic Oncology at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center. Katz is recognized as an expert in the field of prostate cryosurgery. He has published over 100 scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, and has written four chapters for urologic textbooks. He is also the host of a radio program called Katz's Corner on WABC radio which airs every Sunday morning at 7 AM from New York City.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF The mission of the Center for Holistic Urology (www.holisticurology.columbia.edu) at Columbia University Medical Center is to increase the state of health of men and women with urologic diseases by using complementary therapies such as acupuncture, clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, exercise, and mind-body therapies and to promote understanding of such therapies by conducting high quality basic science research and clinical trials.

As one of the most comprehensive university hospitals in the world, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital (www.nyp.org) boasts leading specialists in every field of medicine and is composed of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center and NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, and affiliated with Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and Weill Cornell Medical College. NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital is ranked higher in more specialties than any other hospital in the New York area by U.S.News & World Report.

What is holistic urology and how does it affect cancer?

Our approach to treating prostate cancer for many men that get diagnosed in 2011 with early stage disease is to take a more complete body approach – a holistic approach – to incorporate nutrition, vitamins, and herbal compounds that not only can stabilize prostate cancer but have great added health benefits such as cardiovascular and vascular health.

We use certain vitamins, herbs, nutrition, and an exercise program and the majority of men feel much better and are able to stabilize or even reduce their PSA levels.

Many men that have these low levels of prostate cancer cells aren't going to have any life-altering effect from these cells. We find these cells because we have tests like the PSA and prostate biopsies that can detect them, but just because we have detected the cells doesn't necessarily mean that every man needs to be treated.

In fact, the majority of men that are in their 70s or 80s that get diagnosed with a small non-aggressive level of these cells do not need to undergo conventional surgery or radiation, both of which can have significant side effects.

Our holistic approach has very little risk and great benefits for the majority of patients, and we have defined the term "active holistic surveillance" rather than just an act of surveillance, which is not just monitoring your blood test but also incorporating some terrific evidence-based medicine approaches.

Do these techniques lower the PSA?

Many times in our studies, especially using some of the herbal anti-inflammatory compounds like Zyflamend, the PSA values can be lowered or stabilized.

We recently completed a trial that shows we can prevent prostate cancer in men that have had a pre-malignant condition of the prostate called PIN. In our Phase One trial, we showed that there were men in the trial that had a pre-cancerous condition that took the herbal supplement for 18 months, and at the end of the 18 months, not only didn't they develop cancer, but their pre-cancerous condition was gone.

It appears there is a lot of hope for people as a result of what you have studied.

There is a lot of hope and promise, but there is more research that needs to be done, so we can prove it in the conventional way.

What I know from taking care of hundreds of patients with early- and late-stage prostate

cancer is there is no doubt that these treatments can give a great benefit to men with very little risk, they can improve and restore the body's nutritional deficiencies, and they can enhance the body's immune system to fight many of these cancers in a more natural and healing way.

I'm not here to say that I don't believe that, in certain cases, surgery is reasonable. I am biased against radiation and I do not recommend it for my patients. It goes against my philosophy to radiate a patient's body with external beam radiation, because I believe it can cause other cancers to develop and patients can develop long-standing side effects – I have seen it and it has been proven – and I believe it can lower the body's immune system.

But there are cases, especially in younger men who get diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer, that do need surgery, and I do recommend the robotic da Vinci surgery procedure, with which we have had excellent results at Columbia University.

What led you into holistic medicine?

I was trained as a conventional medical doctor but had an opportunity to work at an alternative medicine center in New York City called the Atkins Center, and saw many of the patients there that were doing fine taking herbs and vitamins that I would have thought at the time should have had surgery.

It made me open my eyes to the world of alternative medicine. So we established the Center for Holistic Urology at Columbia University in 1998. The center has several practitioners in it, we have researchers, and we have a basic laboratory in which we do research on herbs from all over the world to see if we can determine which have an effect on the growth of prostate cells.

With all of the things that you're engaged in medically, what is your biggest frustration?

That Mother Nature doesn't give up her secrets all that quickly and that these solutions are not proven.

But sometimes in medicine, we have to go with our gut. I often see patients that are frustrated because they were diagnosed with an early stage prostate cancer and they were given so many opinions. When you have a number of different options, then it comes down to what is right for the individual patient.

Doctors get so focused on looking at their one area of expertise and that is where holistics is different – we look at the whole body and the patient, and treat patients individually. ●