

Dear Dr. Vliet,

I cannot thank you enough for sharing with us your current information about the danger of cognitive impairment in men taking testosterone antagonists as a treatment for prostate cancer. My husband's urologist, who recommended the testosterone antagonist, never mentioned a thing about studies showing cognitive impairment although he did list other possible effects such as depletion of calcium from bones, decreased muscle strength, hot flashes, and increased risk of heart attacks. Cognitive impairment was a big red flag to us, something high on our priority list of dangers to avoid.

After your warning we read research studies showing cognitive impairment from testosterone antagonists and decided that this treatment was unacceptable to us both. After talking with a radiologist recommended by our urologist, we decided against that too and went on to research several alternatives, including High Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU), a non-invasive treatment done on an outpatient basis that essentially cooks the prostate tissue. We talked for several hours with a HIFU expert, who had been on the teaching faculty at NYU. He immediately said, "Did your urologist warn you about the possibility of cognitive impairment with testosterone antagonists?" "No," we said, "but our hormone expert in Tucson alerted us to this danger." A month later, my husband had HIFU treatment in Nassau. (HIFU is not yet approved by the FDA and thus cannot be done in the USA, in spite of being widely used in Europe, Australia, and the East.) The HIFU procedure was done as out-patient treatment under light anesthesia and several hours later we were back in our hotel in Nassau, able to take a walk and enjoy dinner. Two days later we flew home. My husband has been very pleased with HIFU, has experienced no complications and had a follow-up PSA of 0.04 vs his pre-treatment PSA of 14, thus demonstrating that the prostate tissue had been destroyed.

Your warning gave us the opportunity to become informed consumers, explore our options and ask relevant questions so we could decide on a therapy which was acceptable to us. This is the way medicine should be practiced: freedom of choice, recommendations by experts, enough information for patients to make informed choices and the option of paying for treatments which insurance companies will not cover. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom and expertise about hormones with us.

Sincerely,
Margaret S., Ph.D.