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# Special Report



John Stewart lost his fight against prostate cancer on Good Friday, aged 49.

## 'He glossed over symptoms and just laughed them off'

John Stewart fought a courageous battle against prostate cancer - a disease killing 11,000 men in the UK each year. This touching tribute to a man who accomplished so much in his life before it was tragically cut short is written by his widow Catherine.

“JOHN was diagnosed with prostate cancer in February 2008. He had founded and run three high-tech companies. He was fit and healthy, a serious long-distance cyclist and committed rower.

Initially he put his symptoms down to 'getting a bit older' - getting up sometimes in the night and losing what he described as his 'range' when having a pee.

As I think many of our menfolk would do, he glossed over the symptoms and laughed them off.

We went to stay in a big old chilly house, no central heating, snow outside and two flights of stairs to the loo, it made us both clearly aware that his night visits to the loo were more than occasional.

I marched him off to our GP in January 2008. An initial examination followed by a biopsy a week later showed the tumour had already spread.

The oncologists started John on hormone therapy. He fared well and we held our breath.

He was given localised radiotherapy and at the same time decided to embark on a swim challenge to prove he was still fit.

With our two daughters Jessica, now 16, and Esme, now 12, we swam the equivalent of the Channel in the eight-week course of this treatment.

John was still working flat out and keen to prove he was still fit and strong, so we planned what was to be our last family bike ride - 300 miles around the Welsh borders, in one week.

Weeks after our adventure, we were told the hormone therapy had stopped being effective.

Sitting at yet another clinic appointment being told the cancer was spreading was a low point but we kept our spirits up while the oncologist decided on a course of chemotherapy.

Christmas came, John finished his chemotherapy and, sporting his new minimalist chemo haircut, we set about enjoying the festive season with friends and family.

New Year 2010 dawned and as his hair grew, so did his energy and once again we dared to hope.

Summer came but he was getting weaker and complaining about pain in his legs.

He then complained of severe hip pain and was discovered to have a complex fracture in his right hip.

He was referred to Stanmore Orthopaedic Hospital. Six weeks of travelling to Middelex whilst juggling school commitments and work was tough but worth it once we got John home.

With crutches he was now more comfortable but we had to order a wheelchair and bed hoist, and his mobility continued to deteriorate.

With John unable to get out, friends queued up to visit, some for a quick cup of tea or beer, some for supper and many for the weekend, cramming as much fun and friendship as possible into a limited time.

He and I knew what was by now inevitable.

John was again struggling with pain in his ankle after another bone secondary flared up and more radiotherapy was booked. This was to be the pattern for the next few months.

He continued to work, even organising a board meeting around his bed the week before he died - on Good Friday morning.

Nearly 600 people attended his funeral, his rowing crew carried his coffin into church, and beautiful tributes were spoken and sung, including a poem from Esme and Mozart's clarinet quintet played by Jessica and her ensemble.

It was a fitting service for a special man. A Cambridge graduate who had become a local entrepreneur, a sportsman who had cycled across the world and won three rowing blades and a real family man who adored his two girls and only wanted to see them grow up.

It was not much to ask. They were only 11 and 15 when he died. ”

Catherine Stewart

# Should prostate

Catherine Stewart starts a 500km cycle challenge today mapped out by her husband John who died from prostate cancer, aged 49. **Cambridge First** asks should men be routinely screened for the disease? **Charlotte Orson** reports.

A CAMBRIDGE Urologist has called on the Government to further investigate introducing routine screening for prostate cancer.

Although the simple prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test - the only test currently available - is not 100 per cent reliable, countries using the test to routinely screen middle-aged men, including the US, France and Germany, have a far lower death rate from the disease than the UK.

According to a study published by Lancet Oncology, the highest five-year survival rate for prostate cancer is in the US at 91.9 per cent compared with 51.1 per cent in the UK.

In the UK a man dies of prostate cancer every hour, making it the most common male cancer - a statistic Catherine Stewart, 48, is acutely aware of.

Catherine, from Girton,



Nimish Shah, urology consultant at Addenbrooke's.

lost her husband John Stewart and father of her two daughters Jessica, 16, and Esme, 12, on Good Friday following a three-year battle with the cancer.

Today she and 21 other riders will begin a 500km cycle challenge from Pisa to Rome in three days - the route was mapped out by passionate cyclist John, before he died, aged 49 - in a mission to raise awareness of the disease.

Collectively they hope to raise £20,000 for the Prostate Cancer Charity.

Cambridge graduate and entrepreneur John was treated by a number of urologists and oncologists at Addenbrooke's Hospital including urology consultant Nimish Shah.

Mr Shah said often, and in the case of John, when a man begins to display symptoms of prostate cancer the disease is too aggressive to successfully treat.

And he is witnessing an increasing number of younger men being diagnosed with the cancer - the youngest patient Mr Shah has operated on was aged just 36.



John and Catherine Stewart enjoy a day mountain biking.

## Mayor trauma unit to open on April 1

Addenbrooke's to become specialist centre  
Page12



## Hidden treasures of a new career

Life after redundancy

Page14

# we screen for cancer like US?

### The facts

- 37,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer every year
- There are 250,000 men living with the disease
- One man dies every hour of prostate cancer
- The equivalent of 100 men per day will be diagnosed with it
- African Caribbean men are three times more likely to develop the disease than white men
- In England and Wales, men have a one in nine lifetime risk of getting prostate cancer
- Symptoms can be a weak urine flow, needing to urinate more often, difficulty passing urine and erectile dysfunction
- Men can request a PSA test from their GP - it is advised, in particular, that those with a brother or father who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer have a discussion with their GP.

Mr Shah said: "The main problem we have in the UK is we don't routinely offer screening.

"One of the key reasons for not screening is that you would find a proportion of men with low risk prostate cancer which would not pose a threat to their life, but may result in unnecessary anxiety.

"Our survival rates are a long way behind the US and many European countries, including France and Germany, because we don't routinely offer the PSA test.

"In America men have a PSA check from the age of 40 and if it is normal, a further check every two to three years.

"We're picking up patients with a lot more advanced disease than in many other countries such as the US and European countries.

"I would like to see the Government have further discussions about routine PSA screening and for people to discuss with their GP the pros and cons of having a PSA test."

Mr Shah said if high levels of the protein PSA are found in the blood, further tests can be done to establish whether it is cancer and how aggressive the disease is.

He said: "If it is a low risk often for some patients it won't misbehave and it is perfectly reasonable to monitor it.

"And should in the future it become more aggressive then we would recommend to the patient they should act on it."

Treatment can include surgery to remove the whole prostate, radiotherapy with or without hormone treatment to suppress the testosterone reaching the prostate cancer cells and sometimes chemotherapy in advanced cases.

John's widow Catherine - who has taken over jointly managing the technology business Signify John co-founded - wants a more reliable method of diagnosing prostate cancer in its early stages.

She is pressing for men to not bury their head in the sand and seek the advice of their GP should they notice any symptoms such as needing the loo more often.

Catherine said: "We have been through a tough time and I just want to try and prevent someone else going through it and someone else's children losing their daddy.

"Part of the grieving process is about trying to get some sense out of something so negative and try to prevent it happening to someone else in the future or it make it a little bit easier for them."

Catherine said she and the girls are trying to get on with life as best as possible but there are moments when they become overwhelmed by grief.

Her eldest daughter Jessica, a pupil at the Perse, sat her GCSEs just weeks after her father's death and achieved 12 A's and an A grade.

Catherine said: "She would not open her results with her friends and wanted to open them with me and I cried and cried when I was supposed to



John Stewart was a keen cyclist.

be jumping for joy.

"John would have been so proud to be there.

"On a daily basis you can get by but there are moments when all you want is for him to be there."

Catherine said John slowly accepted he would not be able to undertake the 500km Pisa to Rome cycling challenge he eventually mapped out from his bed but still showed a determination to meet the riders in Siena, where he and Catherine got engaged.

"I knew deep down that he would not be able to get on an aeroplane by then," said Catherine.

"He died quite quickly and never really handed over to me.

"It was only two weeks after the funeral that I hacked into his computer and found the route.

"It was a tough route over hilly terrain and it's going to be 30 degrees and I thought 'you toe rag, you're having

the last laugh here'.

"When training half of me is moaning and the other half is having a chuckle."

John's friends from school and university - where he rowed for Pembroke College - as well as friends of friends are among the party beginning the cycling challenge, setting off from Pisa today.

To sponsor the cyclists, visit the website [www.justgiving.com/pisa2rome](http://www.justgiving.com/pisa2rome)

THE UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) reviewed the evidence for prostate cancer screening between March 2009 and June 2010.

The UK NSC concluded that men should not be invited for PSA testing because the risks of over-diagnosis far outweighed any potential reduction in mortality.

This policy will be reviewed in three years or earlier if major new research becomes available.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## News in numbers

**114**

ABSEIL 114ft down Great St Mary's Church in Cambridge for charity on Saturday. Email [laura.hanratta@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:laura.hanratta@actionforchildren.org.uk) for further details.

**10km**

A NEW 10km run is planned in Cambridge for the Guy Fawkes weekend. The event is organised by Friends of Histon & Impington Recreation Ground, a charity that fundraises to improve leisure and sporting facilities on the village recreation ground. To register for the race on Sunday, November 6, visit [www.bonfireburn10.co.uk](http://www.bonfireburn10.co.uk)



**10**

VICTORIA Road in Cambridge is to reopen to traffic tomorrow after being shut for 10 weeks for emergency sewer repairs.

**1400**

MORE than 1,400 people have signed the 'No New Town' petition in a bid to fight plans to close the army barracks in Waterbeach and replace it with a housing estate. A rally will also take place outside Waterbeach Post Office at 3pm tomorrow where villagers - many of whom have settled in Waterbeach after leaving the army base - will be among a placard-waving crowd.

**150**

ADULTS need to be active for 150 minutes a week, according to NHS Cambridge shire. Take part in National Walking Day on Sunday. [www.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk)



**108**

CAMYOGA will be celebrating its first anniversary this weekend with 108 rounds of the gayantri mantra chant. The Hindu prayer to the sun is said to inspire increased wisdom and spiritual growth. Camyoga runs more than 50 classes a week from its centre in George IV Street.

Founder Louise Palmer said: "This event is a celebration of a wonderful year for Camyoga in which we hope we have brought spiritual growth and development to many people in their busy and stressful lives." The anniversary event on Parker's Piece starts at 2pm on Saturday.

**01223**

INCREASING demand for phone numbers will see people in Cambridge having to use the full 01223 area code when making local calls by 2016.

**£1.25m**

WAR hero Lance Corporal Johnson Beharry VC will be the guest of honour today at the launch of the new-look Red Lion at Whittlesford Bridge after a £1.25 million refurbishment. Distinguished for his heroism during his service in Iraq - and famous for his determination on ITV's Dancing On Ice TV programme - he will cut the ribbon at the grand reopening of one of the oldest inns in Cambridgeshire, dating back to the 13th century.

