



LETTER TO THE EDITOR ABOUT A "CANCER SURVIVOR"

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Last April I turned 70. I am a doctor. I have just finished reading "The ablation": Tahar Ben Jelloun's last book. I was bound to read it. The main character in the book and I have one thing in common: we both had a total prostatectomy.

Eleven years ago, I hypothesized a prostatic hyperplasia because I had been getting up at night to urinate for some months, therefore I decided to schedule a medical examination.

An urologist colleague of mine saw me then asked: "Have you ever done a PSA test?"

Me: "Never."

She replied: "Clever, indeed!! I suggest you do it."

Then I underwent a biopsy (Gleason score 7) and an operation.

The difference between the case of the mathematician in the book of the Moroccan writer and mine consisted in the information provided. I was promptly and thoroughly informed before the surgery and the radiotherapy of the consequences they would have had on my sexual life.

In the autumn of my life (I love mild seasons) I reached the "winter of my sexuality", but also with the hope to reach the winter of my life together with my hypertension and atrial fibrillation.

I am a specialist of the developmental age. Especially after the operation, I thought that I was not only in a regressing stage of my life, but also in a progressive one.

It was like a spiritual evolution due to something physically removed from me. It was an awakening of the memory and an enrichment of the desires. Certainly, all this was possible thanks to the people close to me: my wife, my children, my five years old grandson and my friends.

I have also been able to express my life experience thanks to the research project "Dopo il cancro" of the National Cancer Institute of Aviano. This research helped me understand and value even more the mutual trust between doctor and patient, through the relationship with other colleagues. I had already experienced this kind of relationship during my graduate studies thanks to the book "The doctor, the patient and his illness" by Michael Balint.

This memory is still vivid nowadays when "a handful of bad girls", which is still in my pelvic area, has decided to start senseless travels to other districts of my body without caring about the therapy. Indeed, it is not easy to make the metastasis understand that a strong therapeutic alliance between the doctor and the patient is to their disadvantage.

In the book "Miss Smilla's feeling for snow" of the Danish writer Peter Hoeg, a male character asks Smilla: "What do you think about change?" and she replies: "It's supposed to be the spice of life." Differently, for the "bad girls", change could mean being pierced by an oncologist as an entomologist would do with the butterflies.