

Tampa Bay Times

OPINION

Guest Column

Robert Mazur

I faced down drug kingpins. Then cancer came for me

I'm happy to share my story to help those who are fighting prostate cancer.



In this scene from the movie "The Infiltrator," actor Bryan Cranston, left, plays the real-life Robert Mazur, who went undercover to fight the money laundering of a Colombian drug cartel. Mazur fought an infiltrator of his own recently, when he battled prostate cancer. He hopes his story can help others. (Liam Daniel/Broad Green Pictures via AP)

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My life was in danger when I was a federal agent working undercover to bust those who laundered millions of dollars for drug kingpins. My work made enemies who wanted me dead. So it was with some dread that I met last year with a highly reliable source, who confirmed I had once again become the target of one of the world's deadliest killers. But this time, it wasn't a Colombian drug lord. It was cancer.

The reliable source, my urologist, picked up on some red flags that are often ignored by other physicians. Thankfully, he identified this latest hit man at an early stage, and in sufficient time for me to do as I've always done, conduct an intense study about the challenge confronting me and determine the best plan of action to attack it. I am sharing

some general details about this journey in hopes that the research I conducted can be a resource for the nearly 1.5 million men per year, worldwide, diagnosed with prostate cancer. My goal is to be a tiny part of helping cancer victims from becoming a part of the unfortunate reality that roughly 375,000 men around the globe die from prostate cancer annually.

For those of you confronted with this challenge, please know that I'm happy to privately communicate directly with you in much greater detail about what I think I've learned about this killer. My many months of research opened my eyes to an array of tests that revealed important facts, helping me identify my best course of treatment. Additional fact finding opened my eyes to the best qualifications of members on my treatment team, the significant number of different types of equipment used to deliver treatment to patients, and the various protocols followed by radiation oncologists to treat this form of cancer. You may hear otherwise from some health care professionals, but my research and experience convinced me that treatment is definitely not a one size fits all.

Initially, I read everything I could find about treatment options. Step 2 involved my reaching out to many friends and contacts who had been down this road before. Getting insight from them about their journey opened my eyes further to the vastly different methods of treating prostate cancer. Armed with the results of the first two steps, I identified the top three cancer centers I felt had the best reputation, personnel and equipment to lead me through this battle.

I visited each of those cancer centers, met with their prostate oncology teams, including the specific radiation oncologist at each center that, depending on my choice, would direct my treatment. I interviewed each team, learned the treatment protocols they felt were best for me, and questioned them about why their protocols, in some instances, didn't include certain methodologies I learned were employed at other radiation oncology centers that specialized in prostate cancer treatment.

My analysis led me to a specific course of treatment at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas, where I just completed world-class care from an amazing team of radiation oncologists, radiation therapists, physicists and other health care professionals. Not everyone can get to Houston for treatments. Fortunately, there are cancer centers and oncology groups around the world that embrace the protocols I came to know are delivered at M.D. Anderson.

With the help of the talented and caring radiation oncologist, Dr. Quynh-Nhu Nguyen, and her team, I learned details about their unique individualized approach to treatment. They recognize that many "patient unique" factors impact the formulation of the most effective treatment plan. Your age, general health, the stage of your cancer, the aggressiveness of your cancer cells, the condition of your prostate, the condition of your urinary tract, the state of organs and tissue in close proximity to your prostate, your prior medical history, family medical history, and much more, all play into determining optimal treatment protocol.

So, my friends, if you should find yourself in a battle with prostate cancer, please know that I'm here to share my research and thoughts with you. You'll get wonderful advice from many different professional groups that deliver cancer treatment, but from a patient's perspective, I'm ready to extend a helping hand of patient insight and support. I owe so much to so many people who have guided me through a course of treatment that is likely to enable me to achieve a cancer-free life. It would be a privilege to help you in your time of need.

Readers may reach out to Robert Mazur at www.RobertMazur.com

A federal agent for 27 years, he is a court-certified expert in money laundering-related matters in both the U.S. and Canada. He is the New York Times bestselling author of "The Infiltrator," a memoir about the first half of his life undercover as a money launderer within Pablo Escobar's Medellin Cartel, and was an executive producer of the film by the same name. His latest book, "The Betrayal," is a memoir about his final undercover assignment, a deep dive into Colombia's Cali Cartel and Panama's underworld that nearly cost him his life. He is president of KYC Solutions, a company that provides speaking, training, consulting and expert witness services globally.