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Who's the best surgeon for your prostate cancer op?

It's a delicate operation that can leave men impotent and incontinent - so who do the experts turn to?

By [Angela Brooks](#)

Last updated at 8:45 AM on 2nd November 2010



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Delicate: Who do the experts trust to treat prostate cancer?

Around 36,000 men a year are diagnosed with cancer of the prostate, making it the most common male cancer in Britain.

It's also among the most feared, not least because two of the key measures to tackle it — surgery to remove the prostate (radical prostatectomy) or radiotherapy — can leave men incontinent and impotent.

Nerve-sparing prostatectomy, in which the gland is removed with minimal damage to the nerves which control erections, may be possible when the cancer is low grade and hasn't spread.

But the downside of this procedure is it reduces the chance of completely clearing the cancer.

'Some men say forget about the nerves, it's much more important you take out all of the tumour,' says Edward Rowe, a urologist at Southmead Hospital, Bristol.

'Other men say their quality of life will be zero if they lose their potency and they would rather be dead than that.'

Men in Britain are not routinely screened for prostate cancer, partly because the technique for doing this, the PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test, which measures the protein produced by the prostate, is unreliable.

Some men with prostate cancer don't have a raised PSA level, and two-thirds of men with a raised PSA don't have prostate cancer — just an infection or an enlarged prostate, which comes with ageing.

Prostate cancers are slow growing, and the lack of scientific consensus in this field means it can be difficult for surgeons to decide whether to operate or simply regularly monitor the patient until it grows.

This paves the way for both over-treatment and under-treatment — with some men having radical treatment for a prostate cancer that's never going to harm them and others under-treated for a more aggressive disease because the surgery is difficult and the results might be worse than the cancer itself.

Radical prostatectomy can be carried out by open surgery or by keyhole — either by a surgeon directly, or a surgeon using robotic technology.

Although consultants will argue in favour of the benefits of their own chosen method, there is no scientific evidence, as yet, to prove the superiority of one approach over another.

So where surgery is recommended, finding a top-notch surgeon is more important than being swayed by technology — or the lack of it.

So what's the surest way of lining up the country's best surgeons? We've hunted down the UK's top ten outstanding prostate cancer surgeons.

We've turned the spotlight on urologists, even though radiologists and oncologists play an equally important role in prostate cancer treatment. This is because urologists are the treatment gatekeepers who make the diagnoses and will then refer patients to other specialists where necessary.

We felt those best placed to tip the top would be urologists themselves, so we canvassed 40 of them from around the country and asked: 'If your own nearest and dearest required prostate cancer surgery, to whom would you refer them and why?' Each nominated five fellow surgeons.

Those who got the most votes from their peers made it into the Daily Mail's top ranking.

This is a guide, not a scientific study — there are many superb and highly skilled urologists all over the country who didn't make it into our top ten, but who spend every day of their working lives giving their patients the best possible odds of beating their cancer.

All of those in our listing work in the NHS, although the majority do private work as well.



High standards: Professor David Neal

PROF DAVID NEAL

Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge

A very able surgeon technically, who handles tissues beautifully.

In surgery, he won't make three incisions when one will do and he cares about his patients.

He's a scientist, and made the transition from open to robotic surgery — and has immense experience with it.

His standards are extremely high and he can be relied upon to give a unbiased view of the best treatment for patients.



Leader in the field: David Gillatt

DAVID GILLATT

Southmead Hospital, Bristol

He has done huge numbers of open prostatectomies, but switched to robotics a couple of years ago.

He has consistently been a leader in the field and is very highly regarded for his technical work.

He's down-to-earth, his patients love him and he knows his subject inside out.



Top of his game: Professor Noel Clarke

PROF NOEL CLARKE

The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, Manchester

at the top of his game, with very good operating skills.

He's also a good communicator, too, who does open and robotic surgery.

Very involved in research and considers all treatment options.

Some of his patients are recruited on to trials he's involved in.

There's lots of evidence to show patients on trials do better, as they are very carefully monitored under strict guidelines and benefit from getting more time with specialists.



Realist: John B Anderson

JOHN B. ANDERSON

Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield

One of the big beasts of open prostate surgery, he is excellent technically, a good communicator and not motivated by money.

He's a realist about what can and can't be done.

He can be counted on for a balanced view on treatment options, pitching information at the right level for each patient.



Top class: Professor Prokar Dasgupta

PROF PROKAR DASGUPTA

Guy's & St. Thomas' Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London

A top-class technician with wide-ranging knowledge, who would give a very balanced view.

He was the leader of robotic prostatectomy in Britain and has trained many of those starting in robotics.

He would give patients a good and honest opinion on treatment options without pushing anything.



Excellent: Alan Doherty

ALAN DOHERTY

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham

He has excellent, published results with the huge number of keyhole surgery operations he's performed.

This means he's aiming for transparency with his results.

He thinks about the anatomy and plans his surgery precisely, being very careful with tissues to preserve the nerves.



Meticulous: Omer Karim

OMER KARIM

Wexham Park Hospital, Slough

A very good open surgeon, who's now switched to robotics.

Absolutely meticulous with a great technique, he gets into the right spot so that the prostate comes out cleanly, preserving the structures around it which means less blood loss.

He is innovative and tries to work out how to adapt his technique to make his operations better.

He also has great bedside manner.



Top performer: Prof Howard Kynaston

PROF HOWARD KYNASTON

University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff

He is a top performer with open prostatectomy, who is very involved in research.

This puts him at the cutting edge of cancer treatment.

Involved in trials trying to discover the features that distinguish an aggressive cancer that needs radical treatment from a cancer that needs to be observed.

He would give a very balanced view on treatment.



Dedicated: Chris Eden

CHRIS EDEN

Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford

Probably the leader in the field of keyhole radical prostatectomy.

He does huge numbers but doesn't run a conveyor belt and is very dedicated.

He strives for the best results and analyses them very carefully.

It is easy for a surgeon to remove a prostate and join the bits together and get a reasonable result, but he's obsessed with getting the best result.



Experienced: Chris Ogden

CHRIS OGDEN

Royal Marsden Hospital, London

He has huge experience and does a very nice robotic prostatectomy.

He is a good communicator and would not try to shoehorn his patients into surgery.

He neatly handles the tissues and gets consistently good results.

ALSO HIGHLY RECOMMENDED...

Damian Greene, Sunderland Royal Hospital: He is a sensible doctor who offers both radical prostatectomy and cryosurgery, where the gland is frozen to kill off the cancer. (This is considered a treatment for when other measures fail, so generally it's only carried out as part of a trial).

Declan Cahill, Guy's Hospital, London: One of the most experienced keyhole prostate surgeons who now carries out robotics exclusively. Thoughtful and considerate of patient needs.

Bijan Khoubehi, Chelsea & Westminster Hospital: An up-and-coming urologist who does robotic prostatectomy and is technically very strong. He's very good with patients and a decision maker, who would give honest advice on someone considering either surveillance or surgery.

Jim Adshead, Lister Hospital, Stevenage: A capable surgeon, good at preserving the structures around the prostate. He's open to new techniques and doesn't do the same operation robotically as he did with open surgery — which is true of some urologists.

Edward Rowe, Southmead Hospital, Bristol: Very precise. He performed well with open surgery as a junior, but is now just starting out with robotics and flying with it.

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I am very disappointed not to see Mr Timothy Christmas from The Royal Marsden Hospital South Kensington on your list. I am very happy to say without Tim Christmas performing my radical prostatectomy and the marvellous after care I have received I doubt if I would be alive today. How is it that a man of his stature does not appear on your list? I would be interested to know what the criteria was in determining the list you published J L Bullock

- Mr John Bullock, Twickenham Middlesex, 03/11/2010 18:07

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I read your article with interest and it is pleasing to hear that we have some excellent surgeons in England and Wales (no mention of any in Scotland) performing Radical Retropubic Prostatectomies with very positive results. However, I am disappointed that none of the surgeons you quote are based in Scotland. I recently underwent surgery (RRP) some 15 months ago, the operation was carried out by who I believe to be an excellent surgeon in Glasgow. I am currently in remission and hope to be for many years, however, after reading your article I am now of the opinion I now need to make urgent arrangements to ensure I have a will in place before I expire!! Your article is very worrying to say the least especially to all the men who have underwent this major operation in Scotland. Your comments would be appreciated and hopefully a follow-up article to allay the fears of the many men/women who have read your article. G R Smith

- Gordon Smith, Kilmacolm Renfrewshire, 02/11/2010 19:51

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" Who's the best surgeon for your prostate cancer op? " A cardboard one. REAL prostate cancer is a whole-body disease which needs a nutritional regime. MISDIAGNOSED prostate cancer needs no treatment.

- Pat Rattigan, Chesterfield England, 02/11/2010 09:19

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