

## MAY: BLADDER CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

### THE EMBARRASSING CANCER!

*"When I saw blood in my urine, I just hoped that it would go away ... and it did for a while! I was just too embarrassed to talk about it because I saw it as an intensely private matter. I couldn't talk about it to my family, nor even my closest friends, and of course, I put off going to the doctor. It wasn't until the blood showed again and this time, didn't go away, that I finally gritted my teeth and went to the doctor."*

These are the recollections of Tony Moore, bladder cancer survivor of 13 years, on the early warning signs of the cancer.

Blood in the urine (haematuria) can be a critical early warning sign for bladder cancer, among other conditions. It is a sign that is often overlooked, ignored or dismissed because it is embarrassing for a lot of people. Plus, it isn't always easy to detect. The blood may not appear in the toilet bowl as bright red, it might just be showing as discolouration of urine with a pink or rusty tinge. Also, if sanitising tablets or bombs are used in the toilet, their colour may hide any signs of blood.

Bladder cancer is the 11th most common cancer in Australia, as reported By the Australian Government in their Bladder Cancer Statistics Report (2023). It is most common in people over 70 years of age, and more frequent for men, though no-one is immune. Over a thousand Australians die every year, and it is a cancer that has a very high return rate. Across all stages of bladder cancer, the cancer returns in almost 80% of cases, so many people have to contend with it for years. Plus, it is an expensive cancer to treat. Apart from ongoing treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation and immuno-therapies (such as BCG (Baccillus Calmette Guerin), the bladder may have to be removed if detected at a later stage or if the cancer has returned. Bladder replacements such as an internal neobladder may be an option for some but for many older people an external diversion outside of the body (ileal diversion or Indiana pouch) is required. This presents a very strong case for early detection. Early urine testing is key.

As an outcome of Tony Moore's battle with bladder cancer and the need for an expensive neobladder requiring extensive and ongoing care, Tony started a charity to help inform others: [www.bladdercancer.org.au](http://www.bladdercancer.org.au). He joined forces with his oncologist/urologist, Professor Nathan Lawrentschuk (University of Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Hospital, Epworth Health Care and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre) and together they have produced a range of educational resources on bladder cancer conditions and treatments. These resources are updated regularly and have been accessed widely, either from the website or as hardcopy guides, by oncologists, urologists, urology nurses, patients and the public. They are available free of charge.

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[www.bladdercancer.org.au](http://www.bladdercancer.org.au)