

Dr Ethan, 60 B.V.Sc. M.B.B.S. (Qld), M.Inf.Tech. (QUT), FRACGP General Practitioner and Senior University Lecturer who wrestled with symptoms of an enlarged prostate for two years, *BRISBANE*

s100 General Practitioner (GP) with a special interest in men's health, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Medicine, The University of Queensland (UQ), and Veterinarian, Dr Ethan, 60, Brisbane, was diagnosed with benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or an enlarged prostate, in 2020, after experiencing lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) for two years.

An enlarged prostate is a common, urological disease affecting older men^{1,2} that involves a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate gland, and expansion of the surrounding tissues.^{3,4} This enlargement leads to compression of the urethra, reducing the flow of urine from the bladder, and sometimes blocking it entirely.⁵

Dr Ethan has a strong family history of an enlarged prostate. All of his uncles lived with the disease.

Despite leading a very busy work and active physical life, Dr Ethan tolerated his symptoms for two years with incomplete bladder emptying, a weak urine stream, and eventually nocturia (frequent night-time urination). Having managed many patients living with an enlarged prostate, Dr Ethan nonetheless, ignored his own symptoms, attributing them to "normal ageing" and "getting on with life", because "that is what we, men my age, do." He commenced medications for an enlarged prostate, which initially provided temporary relief. However, over time, his nocturia continued to worsen.

As the 'silent disease' progressed, Dr Ethan's prostate continued to grow, thereby exerting further pressure on his urethra, and severely obstructing his urine flow. Over time, his lower urinary tract symptoms took a huge toll on his physical and mental wellbeing. Growing increasingly agitated by his nocturia, Dr Ethan finally decided to pursue a minimally invasive treatment option, that worked for him.

Today, Dr Ethan has chosen to share his story, to raise community awareness and understanding of an enlarged prostate, and to urge men nationwide, to prioritise their health.

This is Dr Ethan's story.

Dr Ethan first developed symptoms of an enlarged prostate in 2018. He commenced medical therapy for the condition in 2020.

"I first noticed my urine flow was becoming a bit weak. After going to the loo, I felt like my bladder had not fully emptied. A couple of minutes later, I'd have to go again," said Dr Ethan.

"Urinating in the middle of the night was my worst, and most distressing symptom, and I realised that my enlarged prostate was worsening, despite maximum medical management."



As Dr Ethan's symptoms grew progressively worse over time, they began to affect his quality of life.

"I started to get cranky.

"I have a busy and demanding job as a doctor, so waking up really tired after an awful night's sleep with nocturia, began to compromise my happy nature, and affected my evening gym sessions," Dr Ethan said.

Dr Ethan was diagnosed with an enlarged prostate after experiencing symptoms for two years.

"After tolerating my symptoms for two years, I finally visited my own GP. We suspected I had an enlarged prostate, and the diagnostic process revealed the severity of my condition.

"I was first placed on medical therapies by my GP, which gave me initial relief. I consulted my urology colleague to discuss other options, but at that point in time, they were reserved for more severe disease," said Dr Ethan.

"Although the medical therapy initially gave me some relief, over the years, my enlarged prostate symptoms continued to progress."

Dr Ethan carried two risk factors for an enlarged prostate – ageing and a family history of the disease.

"Ageing is a big risk factor, given more than 50 to 60 per cent of men in their 60s live with an enlarged prostate,⁶ and as many as 80 to 90 per cent of men aged 70+ years.⁶

"My uncles lived with an enlarged prostate, but never openly discussed it. Unfortunately, men are not conditioned to talk about anything to do with their urogenital tracts or sexual health. This needs to change," Dr Ethan said.

"Men's health is extremely important. My goal as an s100 GP with a special interest in men's health, is to ensure men can address all issues associated with their physical and mental health, in an open, and non-judgemental, safe environment.

"I ask all of my male patients over 50 years of age during a general health check-up, a series of men's health-related questions," said Dr Ethan.

"I always enquire about their urinary habits to determine whether they're experiencing any enlarged prostate symptoms. Most men find it easier to discuss their symptoms when first raised by a GP.

"I'm a strong advocate for keeping on top of an enlarged prostate, to ensure the disease is manageable as it progresses," Dr Ethan said.

"With shared decision-making together with the patient, we discuss treatment options that may be most appropriate."

Dr Ethan maintains early intervention is important for men experiencing enlarged prostate symptoms.

"If not treated early, the bladder may become weakened as it tries to push against the pressure. The bladder wall may eventually become irreversibly thickened, and ineffective in pushing urine out, leading to urinary tract infections, and kidney damage, as urine pools in the bladder and backs up into the kidneys.

"That is why timely treatment for an enlarged prostate is so important," said Dr Ethan.



“Since finding a treatment option that has worked for me, my life has changed significantly.

“I no longer experience the urge to wake up in the middle of the night to pee. I am peeing like a stallion again. My stream has improved, and listening to the sound of my free flowing and strong stream is just awesome,” Dr Ethan said.

“Like many of my patients’ experiences after effective treatment, I too, became aware that my own erectile function began to improve over time.

“Today I feel healthier and happier,” said Dr Ethan.

Dr Ethan has a message for both Australian men living with symptoms of an enlarged prostate, and the community at large.

“If you’re experiencing any enlarged prostate symptoms, please don’t be afraid to seek help.

“Effective, tailored treatment can improve your symptoms, and quality of life,” Dr Ethan said.

“It’s also important that we talk about an enlarged prostate as a community, and normalise the disease, because most men will eventually experience it.”

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To coordinate an interview with Dr Ethan, please contact:

Kirsten Bruce and Sam Jacobs, VIVA! Communications

M 0401 717 566 | 0422 654 404

T 02 9968 3741 | 02 9968 1604

E kirstenbruce@vivacommunications.com.au | sam@vivacommunications.com.au

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