

English translation of our article in the «Bündner Woche», November 27, 2019

## Research in Graubünden

### Men's Health Month

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men in Graubünden



*In November, mustaches raise awareness about men's health.  
Image: Shutterstock*

November sees the arrival of winter in Graubünden. Along with the falling temperatures, the facial hair of previously cleanly shaved gents suddenly starts to sprout. Mustaches are trimmed and plucked into shape. How can this phenomenon be explained? It was in 2003 that two Australians created "Movember" to raise public awareness of men's health with eye-catching moustaches. "Movember" is a combination of the words "Moustache" and November, the month in which the campaign now takes place annually in various countries. The "Movember" initiators want to draw particular attention to prostate cancer, testicular cancer and mental illness.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among men worldwide. What is the situation in Graubünden in this respect? Karim Saba, urologist at the Cantonal Hospital Graubünden (Kantonsspital Graubünden), knows the facts: "Indeed, prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men in Graubünden. The majority of newly diagnosed cases concern the age group between 60 and 79 years. The disease is one of the main causes of cancer-related deaths in the Grisons and ranks second behind lung cancer. In Grisons, an average of 32 men die of prostate cancer every year."

"From the age of fifty, I raise the issue of prevention with patients", Saba explains. The aim of the screening is to detect aggressive cancer early, especially in younger, otherwise healthy men between 50 and 70 years of age, and thus increase the chances of successful treatment. Saba explains why screening does not make sense in every case, "Life expectancy with an untreated, less aggressive prostate cancer can be quite high. If a man also suffers from a relevant disease, for example a serious heart disease, one must therefore carefully consider whether the search for prostate cancer will help the patient."

If a patient decides to undergo a preventive examination, the doctor uses his finger rectally to determine whether the prostate has any unusual changes. In addition, he controls the value of the prostate specific antigen (PSA) by taking a blood sample. If the PSA level is high, this may indicate cancer. Saba points out the pitfalls of PSA, "The PSA level can provide an indication of a type of cancer that may never develop or develop so slowly that it will not cause death. Ideally, we want to discover this form of cancer as little as possible. For example, we often measure the PSA twice before taking any further steps." If there is an

elevated PSA level, it is the standard procedure at the Kantonsspital Graubünden for the prostate to be examined in the MRI, an imaging method for the representation of tissue and organs. The MRI is currently the best way to detect aggressive cancer.

## The Expert



Karim Saba studied medicine at the University of Zurich and completed his specialist training in urology (Facharztausbildung) at the University Hospital of Zurich in 2018. For one year he has been working as a senior physician (Oberarzt) in urology at the Kantonsspital Graubünden. During the week he lives in the old town (Altstadt) of Chur, but on weekends he returns to his hometown Zurich. Please direct your questions on the subject to [info@graduateschool.ch](mailto:info@graduateschool.ch) by December 31 or send us a picture of your Movember moustache.

*Karim Saba*

Find out more about research in Graubünden: [www.academiaaetica.ch](http://www.academiaaetica.ch), [www.graduateschool.ch](http://www.graduateschool.ch).

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