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## Of Mountains and Men: Climbing Mount Elbrus for Prostate Cancer Awareness

Dr. TA Loeffler, a key speaker at PCCN's sixth annual conference, reached the summit of the tallest peak in Europe this July. She aims to complete The Seven Summits (Kilimanjaro, Denali, Elbrus, Aconcagua, Carstensz Pyramid, Vinson, and Everest) before she is through, climbing the highest peak on each of the continents. And her climb of Mount Elbrus, Europe's tallest mountain, put her over halfway to her goal. (Visit [www.taloeffler.com](http://www.taloeffler.com) to read more about her adventures.)



This climb is important for another reason as well. As Loeffler explained before heading off to Russia, "I am dedicating my climb of Elbrus to my dad, Heinz, who is battling prostate cancer." Heinz Loeffler was diagnosed with prostate cancer six months before his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer, so their daughter has watched both parents "struggle with a cancer journey."

"My dad has endured surgery, hormone therapy, and chemotherapy. Throughout the years, he's managed to keep his sense of humour and his ability to face whatever comes. It is time for me now to lend some strength and confidence back," Loeffler writes.

Mount Elbrus certainly demands both. The mountain, an inactive volcano in the western Caucasus mountain range, is so huge that it generates its own weather. In fact, Loeffler had to abandon her 2006 attempt at reaching its summit because of bad weather. She was within 150 metres of her goal.

This time, the weather held off. "When we summited on July 13, the weather was just beginning to turn," she reports. "It was very windy, and when we got to the top, we couldn't see a thing. It was blowing and grey. We could have been almost anywhere in the world except for the summit marker to let us know we had made it."

Dedicating this challenging climb to her father just made sense, according to Loeffler. His vision that life should "include a little of this and a little of that," inspired her to be a generalist, and the experiences that father and daughter had together formed the basis of Loeffler's strength, both physical and mental. "I know those experiences are woven together in me forming the weft on which the confidence I have to undertake my adventures is woven," she writes.

Loeffler also undertook the climb to raise awareness of prostate cancer and to raise funds for the Network. "This non-profit association offers men and their families support for the journey of prostate cancer," she writes. Just as she draws strength from "having a community that follows behind and climbs with her in spirit," men newly diagnosed with prostate cancer benefit from the support of a community of survivors---the Prostate Cancer Canada Network, which, together with [Prostate Cancer Canada](http://www.prostatecancer.ca), provides a renewed, unified approach to battling the most common cancer to afflict men.

At the PCCN's sixth annual conference, Dr. TA Loeffler will share some of her perceptions about the importance of working together to meet challenges. Her talk, "The View From Up Here," will focus on the life lessons she has learned---both from climbing and from her dad.

For more information on the conference, [click here](#). Registration is possible until August 31.