To PSA screen or not to PSA screen?

By ACSH Staff — September 28, 2010

A new study suggests that most men do not need frequent prostate-specific antigen (PSA) tests [1] to screen for prostate cancer after they turn 60, the age at which PSA levels can predict one’s risk of dying from the disease. According to the study [2] published in *BMJ*, a 60-year-old man with a PSA score of 1.0 or below has only a 0.2 percent risk of dying from prostate cancer within the next 25 years, while a PSA score just over 2.0 resulted in a 6 percent risk, and a score of 5.0 resulted in a 17 percent risk.

“While the evidence supporting any lifesaving benefit of PSA screening is scanty and fraught with unintended consequences relating to over-diagnosis and needless major surgery, this is an important study,” says ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross. “Many men do have the PSA test, so a low result at age 60 can now be said to give them comfort enough not to have the test repeatedly and not to worry about prostate cancer sneaking up on them later. Of course, this study needs to be confirmed before being considered authoritative.”

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