PSA for Elderly Often Unnecessary

Many elderly men undergo unnecessary prostate cancer screenings, while men in their early 50s — who are more likely to benefit from early diagnosis and treatment — do not, according to a new study published March 28 in the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

Surveys conducted in 2000 and 2005 show that nearly half of men in their 70s had a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening, a blood test that can detect early signs of prostate cancer, in the past year. As a result, 750,000 men with an estimated life expectancy of approximately five years received PSA screenings each year. These men are unlikely to reap a meaningful benefit.

Because prostate cancer tends to grow slowly, many men in their 70s and older will die of other causes before prostate cancer requires medical attention. Overuse of PSA screening may lead to unnecessary treatment, which can cause complications such as incontinence, impotence or bowel dysfunction.

“Our findings show a high rate of elderly and sometimes ill men being inappropriately screened for prostate cancer,” said Scott Eggener, MD, assistant professor of surgery at the University of Chicago.

“We were also surprised to find that nearly three-quarters of men in their 50s were not screened within the past year. These results emphasize the need for greater physician interaction and conversation about the merits and limitations of prostate cancer screening for men of all ages.”

Physicians should be more selective in recommending PSA testing for older men, particularly those with a limited life expectancy, the study authors suggest, and physicians should consider screening younger, healthier men more routinely, since these patients are most likely to benefit.

“Excessive screening for prostate cancer in elderly men who have limited life expectancies in the United States results in unnecessary anxiety, diagnoses, over-treatment, treatment-related morbidity and health care expenditures without meaningful clinical benefit,” the authors conclude.

New Hospital Pavilion Project Helps Benefit Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses

The New Hospital Pavilion (NHP) is the largest single health care investment in the history of the University of Chicago Medical Center. Scheduled to open in 2013, the impressive 1.2-million-square-foot building is already an economic engine fueling minority- and women-owned companies in the greater Chicagoland region.

As the project has evolved since 2008, the Medical Center has awarded and paid close to $97.6 million in contracts to 94 minority- and women-owned business enterprises, such as material suppliers, construction contractors and professional services firms.

“Our goal is to ensure that at least 40 percent of our construction contracts are awarded to minority business enterprises and women-owned business enterprises,” said Joan Archie, executive director of construction compliance at the Medical Center. “It’s our aim to strengthen these firms.”

Since 2001, the Medical Center has paid more than $200 million to minority- and women-owned businesses and to minority and female workers in construction and renovation projects. The Medical Center monitors these numbers closely as part of its larger commitment to diversity and community investment, said Bill Huffman, vice president of facilities, design and construction.

“We want our construction projects to mirror the diverse workforce we have at the Medical Center itself,” Huffman said. “Beyond this, our minority and female firms and workers have done a top-flight job. On the NHP, the work has been outstanding. We are on schedule and the expenses have been at or under budget. This is going to be a state-of-the-art facility, and we couldn’t be more pleased.”