

Prostate Health Month—get screened for prostate cancer

What if there was a simple blood test that identified breast cancer? Or lung cancer? Or colon cancer? The public and doctors would be overjoyed! But there is none. (There are screening tests for those cancers, but they are not as simple as a blood test.)

There is, however, a simple blood test that is extremely useful for the early detection of prostate cancer: the PSA blood test. There has been a lot of information and discussion in popular and medical print about prostate cancer in the past year or so. Much of it has had to do with PSA testing and the possibility that doctors are finding and treating too much prostate cancer. Who would ever have thought those words would come out of medical mouths!

While there is room for debate about appropriate use of the PSA test, there is no doubt that it has saved many men's lives by tipping off their physicians that the man had prostate cancer before any other sign was present. I do agree that there are men who are better candidates for PSA screening than others, and there is also room for discussion about whether every case of prostate cancer needs aggressive treatment. However, one cannot have these discussions about whether a particular man's prostate cancer needs treatment until one knows that the man has developed it. Early detection of prostate cancer (or any cancer) is the key to successful treatment, and the PSA blood test helps with early detection.

September is National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. As part of the awareness movement, a free prostate cancer screening clinic is being offered at the New Hanover County Health Department, 2029 S. 17<sup>th</sup>, on Saturday September 28, 2013 from 8-1130am. You can schedule an appointment at the clinic by calling 910-798-6683. The screening consists of a PSA blood test and a prostate physical exam. You will be notified of the results and offered physician follow-up if indicated.

Other diseases of the prostate, including prostate infection and benign (non-cancerous) prostate enlargement, can also be identified at screening. Finding and treating these conditions may lead to improvement in your daily life.

Optimal candidates for screening are men between the ages of 40 and 70 and particularly men who have any blood relatives who have had prostate cancer. Men over age 70 who are in good health may also be candidates for screening.

Please take advantage of this opportunity to preserve your health.

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