



Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities

Researching and reducing cancer-related health disparities

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Study Confirms PSA Test Reduces Prostate Cancer Deaths in Blacks and Whites



Dr. Kenneth C. Chu

Patterns of incidence, survival, and mortality support the contention that increased PSA testing has resulted in earlier detection of prostate cancer, thus reducing the prostate cancer death rate in both black men and white men in the U.S., according to a new study. Cancer statistics support the notion that PSA testing locates cancer in the prostate before it has a chance to metastasize, or migrate, to other locations in the body where it leads to fatal tumors.

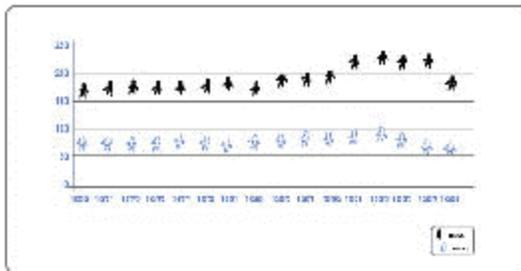
PSA blood tests detect increased levels of a substance called prostate-specific antigen (PSA) that are a warning of possible prostate disease. Prostate cancer can be cured, if diagnosed early, before it spreads.

Tumors that, without intervention, would be diagnosed in the lethal, distant stage are being detected early by PSA testing, so that men are diagnosed in the localized or regional stage; the resulting marked improvement in prognosis leads to decreasing mortality rates," according to an examination of mortality data by researchers at the National Cancer Institute.

Prostate cancer mortality rates in both white men and black men currently are at their lowest levels in several decades for many age groups, the researchers noted. Since this study can not prove PSA is beneficial, discussion of the pros and cons of PSA testing are needed. These discussions are critical because black men in the U.S. still have some of the highest prostate cancer rates in the world.

The study, Trends in Prostate Cancer Mortality among Black Men and White Men in the United States, was authored by Dr. Kenneth C. Chu, CRCHD Health Scientist Administrator; Dr. Harold P. Freeman, director of the CRCHD; and Robert E. Tarone, NCI's Biostatistics Branch. It is published in the March 15, 2003 issue of the journal Cancer.

Stat Byte



Prostate cancer mortality rates in the U.S. declined after 1991 in white men and after 1992 in black men. The cause is increased detection of prostate cancer before it migrates away from the prostate to produce fatal tumors, researchers suggest. Increased use of PSA testing for prostate cancer after 1986 may explain the mortality decreases, which came while there were large increases in the number of men treated for prostate cancer since 1986. Black men in the U.S. still have some of the highest prostate cancer rates in the world.