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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Men's Health Network and Veteran's Health Council Respond to New Prostate Cancer Screening Recommendations

Washington, DC - October 11, 2011- Men's Health Network (MHN) is very concerned about the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) draft recommendations on the use of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing in the early detection of prostate cancer.

On Friday, the USPSTF released draft recommendations downgrading PSA testing to "D", recommending against the use of PSA testing in healthy men that "do not have symptoms that are highly suspicious for prostate cancer." A "D" grade also means that there is moderate or high certainty that the service has no net benefit, or that the harms outweigh the benefits.

This is particularly disturbing since the new health legislation, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires group and individual health plans to cover without cost-sharing only those preventive services rated A and B by the USPSTF.

Every man should be entitled to an informed discussion with his physician about whether PSA testing is appropriate for him. PSA testing, when properly translated, can be an important tool in helping to diagnose prostate cancer. More education is needed to let men know that not all prostate cancers are aggressive and that a man can choose to treat or utilize active surveillance, but a man has a right to know if he has cancer and to make an informed decision on how to move forward.

"We know that prostate cancer deaths have dropped as a result of awareness and prostate cancer screening. The decision of the panel sends the wrong message to men whose lives might now be in danger because they will be discouraged from getting screened. This especially puts African-American men, men exposed to Agent Orange, and men with a family history, all of whom are at increased risk of developing prostate cancer and dying from the disease, in great danger," stated Ana Fadich, MPH, CHES, Director of Programs at MHN.

Thomas Berger, PhD, Executive Director of the Veteran's Health Council explained, "Veterans exposed to Agent Orange are at least twice as likely to develop prostate cancer, their recurrence rates are higher, and recurring cancers are more aggressive. PSA testing in combination with a digital rectal exam is the best method we currently have of catching prostate cancers in their earliest stages."

We are hopeful about the promise of new and better biomarkers that are in the pipeline to help accurately diagnose and discern between aggressive and indolent prostate cancers. Thanks to research much progress has been made on this front, but until new screening and detection methods are put into practice we will continue to support the use of the PSA test as a screening tool.

About Men's Health Network

MHN is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men and their families where they live, work, play, and pray with health prevention messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities and patient navigation. For more information, please visit www.menshealthnetwork.org.

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