Comparing the Effects of How Often Men Have PSA Testing in the First Year after Prostate Cancer Treatment

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Organization

The Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology Foundation

What was the research about?

Men treated for prostate cancer usually have prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, blood tests as part of their follow-up care. This test helps detect if prostate cancer has returned. But doctors differ in how often they recommend that men have follow-up PSA tests.

In this project, the research team did two studies that looked at men with prostate cancer who differed in how often they received PSA tests in the first year after treatment. They studied whether more PSA tests led to better health outcomes.

What were the results?

Study 1. The research team compared groups of men who had either zero or one, two, or three or more PSA tests in the first year. The three groups didn't differ in

- Survival
- Rate of prostate cancer returning
- How soon doctors detected cancer that came back

Study 2. Anxiety, overall quality of life, and quality of life related to their cancer didn't differ based on the number of PSA tests men had in the first year.

Who was in the study?

Study 1. The research team used records from the National Cancer Data Base. The records included 10,479 men diagnosed with prostate cancer between 2005 and 2010. These men had radiation or surgery to

treat the cancer. Of the men, 72 percent were white, 13 percent were African American, and 15 percent were another race or Hispanic. The average age was 63.

Study 2. The team used surveys from 835 men diagnosed with prostate cancer between 2011 and 2013 who participated in the North Carolina Prostate Cancer Comparative Effectiveness and Survivorship Study. These men had radiation or surgery to treat the cancer. Of these men, 66 percent were white, 30 percent were African American, and 4 percent were another race or Hispanic. The average age was 63.

What did the research team do?

Study 1. The research team grouped men based on whether they were at low, medium, or high risk of their cancer coming back, and if they had surgery or radiation. The team then sorted men into three categories based on how many PSA tests they had the first year. Then they compared health outcomes across these categories.

Study 2. Men completed surveys about anxiety related to prostate cancer and quality of life once a year for five years. The research team sorted men based on how many PSA tests they had the first year. The team then compared changes in anxiety and quality of life across the three categories.

Prostate cancer survivors and cancer doctors helped plan the study.

What were the limits of the study?

Patients may have had more or fewer tests in later years than they did in the first year. The first study had fewer men than planned, making it hard to find differences in survival or cancer return rates. In the second study, fewer men answered surveys over time, which could make results less accurate.

Future research could follow patients for longer.

How can people use the results?

Prostate cancer survivors and their doctors can use these results when considering how often to schedule PSA testing after treatment.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Chen303.