

PROSTATE TESTS

Used carefully, the tests can help prevent death

I advise and treat many men with prostate cancer, almost always found by PSA testing and subsequent biopsy ("Prostate cancer test 'does not save lives,' " Oct. 7). While some of these men may never have needed the treatment I prescribed, many would have died or suffered unnecessarily without surgery or radiation.

While the new recommendation by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force against PSA testing is partly based on our oath to "first, do no harm," we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater. The challenge is to treat only those who have a lethal form of this cancer.

We should continue to test for the disease, but be more selective in those who need treatment.

Active surveillance of prostate cancer is perfectly appropriate for many men. We, as physicians, can council men on the risks and benefits of screening, treating or simply living with a less aggressive form of prostate cancer. We shouldn't disparage PSA testing. We should just use it wisely.

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