Shared Decision-Making for Prostate Cancer Early Detection

Having a discussion with your health care provider is necessary to making an informed decision about prostate cancer screening. It is important you and your provider make a decision that best meets your needs; this is called "shared decision-making".

What you should know:

- PSA (prostate-specific antigen) is a blood test used to screen for prostate cancer. In its early stages, prostate cancer causes no symptoms.

- The decision to have PSA testing is complex. There are potential benefits and harms of prostate cancer screening, which are essential to understand before making a decision.

- The primary goal of PSA testing is to save lives by detecting aggressive prostate cancer early, when treatment is most effective.

- The risks of PSA testing are:

    1. Additional tests and procedures in men who have a high PSA but do not actually have prostate cancer.

    2. Potential side effects from diagnostic procedures and treatments that may reduce quality of life.

    3. Over-treatment of men who have slow-growing prostate cancer that would not have caused them problems during their lifetime.

Identifying what is important to each individual is key:

Patient Role

- Become informed about tests, procedures and treatments that may be recommended if the PSA is elevated. Understand potential side effects.

- Decide who to share the decision with (family, friends, peers, physician).

Provider Role

- Evaluate factors such as age, life expectancy, family history, ethnicity, symptoms, and DRE, to facilitate a risk-based strategy to prostate cancer screening.

- Find out what matters to the patient.

- Provide guidance individualized to each patient.

Physicians of the Genito-Urinary Tumor Site Committee at Salem Cancer Institute compiled this information to help you decide whether or not to undergo PSA testing. For more detailed information, review the pros and cons of Prostate Cancer Early Detection at www.nccn.org, the website of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network.

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