TO: News Editor
FROM: Daniel Lowery, Health Educator
RE: Prostate/Testicular Cancer
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Attention Men: September 17-23 is Prostate Cancer Awareness Week

Men ages 50 and over, or if you are in the high-risk group which includes African Americans and men who have a father, brother or son with prostate cancer, the age limit lowers to 40 years old, you should be getting your prostate checked annually. According to the National Prostate Cancer Coalition, 1 in every 6 men will develop prostate cancer in his lifetime. In African Americans, prostate cancer will affect 1 out of every 4 males. A male with a close relative who has prostate cancer reduces the ratio to 1 in 3. This year, 232,000 cases are expected - more than breast cancer. Prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in men in the U.S. It is expected to claim more than 30,000 men this year. So put down the remote, pick up the phone and make an appointment to get your prostate checked.

There are really no tell-tale symptoms to give us a warning of prostate cancer. This should give men who fall in this age range more reason to get themselves checked. The physical exam is a digital rectal exam or DRE. It consists of the doctor inserting a lubricated gloved finger into the rectum to feel around the prostate gland. This can be coupled with a yearly blood test which checks for increased prostate specific antigen (PSA) levels. According to the American
Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology, increased levels of this protein produced by the prostate may be a sign of prostate cancer. A study presented in October 2005 that spanned 10 years showed that men “who have an annual PSA test will have a 3.6 percent chance of dying from the disease, compared to 11.3 percent in the general population”. This means that men screened have a nearly 3 times less likely risk of dying from prostate cancer as men who aren’t screened with a PSA test. These tests performed together allow for “about 9 out of 10 cases to be found early” which leads to “about 100% of men diagnosed in the early stages of prostate cancer are still alive 5 years from the diagnosis,” according to the National Prostate Cancer Coalition.

Younger men have a valid reason to be concerned about another type of cancer that affects white men 4 times more than African Americans. Health Educator, Dan Lowery states, “testicular cancer primarily affects men 15 to 35 years of age, but all men should be performing a regular self testicular self-examination or TSE every month.” It works best to perform a TSE after a warm bath or shower. What to look for is a lump about the size of a pea that is usually painless. An excellent website, www.ontumor.com describes exactly how to conduct a TSE.

Early detection is the key in treating both prostate and testicular cancer. If the cancer is found and removed while it is localized and not spread into lymph nodes, then the possibility of recovery and living increases dramatically. So it is up to men to take charge in maintaining their health. Make an appointment today to get your prostate checked. Perform a monthly testicular self exam and alert your doctor to any changes or irregularities. Take charge of your health, men, it is National Prostate Cancer Awareness Week!

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon Counties.