



UROLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF AUSTRALIA
AND NEW ZEALAND

MEDIA RELEASE

20 September 2024

Men Risking Their Lives over Prostate Cancer Myths

With 26,368 men expected to be diagnosed with prostate cancer in Australia this year, the Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand (USANZ) is warning that two widespread misconceptions could be costing men their lives.

These dangerous myths – that men must have symptoms before they need to be tested and fears of needing a rectal examination for the diagnosis of prostate cancer – can lead to delayed diagnoses and poorer outcomes.

“Many men believe that they need to have urinary symptoms to be concerned about prostate cancer,” said Associate Professor Weranja Ranasinghe, Deputy Leader of USANZ’s GU-Oncology Special Advisory Group.

“The reality is that most prostate cancers develop without any symptoms at all. Urinary symptoms are not reliable - most of these symptoms are caused by non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate but advanced cancer can also give you urinary symptoms. So it is important to get checked.”

Another significant barrier is the outdated belief that prostate cancer testing requires an invasive rectal examination.

“This is a common fear among men, but it's no longer necessary for initial prostate cancer screening,” said A/Prof Ranasinghe.

“A simple PSA blood test, combined with advanced imaging like MRI, is now the standard approach. Many men are avoiding tests due to this outdated fear, but in the GP setting, a rectal exam is currently not required for detecting prostate cancer.”

Data shows men with a family history of prostate cancer are at higher risk and need to be especially vigilant. If a close blood relative has had cancer, their risk significantly increases – up to five times higher in some cases.

“What’s less well-known is the connection between breast cancer genes (BRCA1 and BRCA2) and prostate cancer,” said A/Prof Ranasinghe.

“Men with female relatives who have had breast or ovarian cancer are also at an increased risk of prostate cancer due to the same genetic mutations. So we recommend that men with a strong family history get a PSA test at the age of 40, which is earlier than the recommended age.”

Another alarming trend is that many men only seek testing after hearing about prostate cancer within their social networks.

"We often see men wait until a friend or relative is diagnosed before thinking about getting a prostate cancer PSA test done," said A/Prof Ranasinghe.

"This reactive approach is dangerous. Men need to be proactive and take ownership of their prostate health and talk to their GPs about this, just like they would with cholesterol or other routine health checks."

During Prostate Cancer Awareness Month this September, USANZ is urging men to overcome these myths and fears and get tested early.

"Early detection saves lives. A quick blood test could make all the difference between catching prostate cancer early, when it’s most treatable, than facing more difficult outcomes later on," said A/Prof Ranasinghe.

About Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand is the peak professional body for urological surgeons in Australia and New Zealand. Urologists are surgeons who treat men, women and children with problems involving the kidney, bladder, prostate and male reproductive organs. These conditions include cancer, stones, infection, incontinence, urination difficulties, sexual dysfunction and pelvic floor problems. <https://www.usanz.org.au/>