

Younger men with advanced prostate cancer have shorter survival times

Date: 22/05/2009

While young men with prostate cancer have a low risk of dying early, those with advanced forms of cancer do not live as long as older men with similar forms of the disease. That is the conclusion of a new study published in the July 1, 2009 issue of *Cancer*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society.

The paradoxical findings indicate that there may be biological differences between prostate cancers that develop in younger men and those that develop in older men, and that uncovering these differences may help tailor screening and treatment strategies for patients based on age.

In general, a younger cancer patient has a better prognosis than an older patient with the same type of cancer. Few studies have analyzed the health of younger vs. older men after diagnosis and treatment for prostate cancer, though.

To investigate the impact of age on prostate cancer prognosis, Daniel Lin, M.D., of the University of Washington and colleagues designed a study to examine the association between age at diagnosis and health outcomes in men diagnosed with prostate cancer in the United States. Mining the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) database, the investigators identified 318,774 men diagnosed with prostate cancer between 1988 and 2003. Men aged 35 to 74 years were stratified by age at the time of diagnosis, and the researchers examined differences in tumor characteristics, treatment, and survival within each age group.

The analysis revealed that, over time, men are being diagnosed with prostate cancer at younger ages, likely due to more extensive screening. Also, younger men are more likely to be treated with prostatectomy, have less aggressive cancers, and have a better chance of survival after 10 years compared with older men. However, among men with advanced prostate cancers, the youngest men (aged 35 to 44 years) have a particularly poor prognosis compared with older men. These young men are more likely to die from cancer or another cause sooner than older men with similar forms of cancer.

While the reasons for this unexpected finding are not clear, the researchers suspect that young men with advanced prostate cancer may have biologically more aggressive forms of the disease than the forms that are diagnosed in older men. Additional studies are needed to determine what, if any, underlying differences exist between advanced prostate cancer found in young men vs. those found in older men. These studies may help clinicians improve screening in young men and could ultimately lead to the development of better treatment strategies for these patients.

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Article: "Treatment and survival outcomes in young men diagnosed with prostate cancer: a population based cohort study." Daniel W. Lin, Michael Porter, and Bruce Montgomery. *CANCER*; Published Online: May 22, 2009 (DOI: 10.100224324/cncr.24324); Print Issue Date: July 1, 2009.