

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month! Please join with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in promoting awareness of prostate cancer and the prostate cancer screening benefit covered by Medicare.

Prostate cancer is the second most common type of cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among men in the US. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 234,460 new cases and 27,350 deaths are expected in 2006. All men are potentially at risk; however, the incident of prostate cancer rises dramatically with increasing age. The risk of prostate cancer is significantly higher among African-American men, and men who have a family history of the disease are also at increased risk.

Medicare began providing coverage of prostate cancer screening tests/procedures for the early detection of prostate cancer January 1, 2000. Medicare provides coverage of a digital rectal examination (DRE) and a prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test once every 12 months for all men with Medicare over the age of 50 for the early detection of prostate cancer.

PSA and DRE screening can detect prostate cancer in its early stages. However, while the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) found good evidence that PSA screening can detect early-stage prostate cancer, it has mixed and inconclusive evidence that early detection improves health outcomes. The USPSTF notes that screening is associated with potential harms and concludes that evidence is insufficient to determine whether the benefits outweigh the possible harms for a screened population. Consequently, the USPSTF recommends that clinicians discuss the potential benefits and possible harms of prostate cancer screening with their patients before performing screening procedures. (For more information on potential benefits and possible harms associated with prostate cancer screening, please refer to “USPSTF Screening for Prostate Cancer” <http://www.ahcpr.gov/clinic/uspstf/uspsprea.htm> on the Internet.)

You Can Help Your Patients Make An Informed Decision

You can help your Medicare patients make an informed decision about prostate cancer screening by:

- Providing your patients with current information to help them understand the nature of prostate cancer and their risks factors for developing the disease; and,
- Talking with your patients about the types of prostate cancer screenings covered by Medicare and the potential benefits and possible risks of the screenings.

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month is the perfect time to promote discussion about prostate cancer and the screening benefit covered by Medicare. As a trusted source of health care information, your recommendation can help your patients make an informed decision about prostate cancer screening. It could potentially save their lives.

For More Information

- For more information about Medicare’s prostate cancer screening benefit, visit the CMS website: www.cms.hhs.gov/ProstateCancerScreening/
- CMS has also developed a variety of educational products and resources to help health care professionals and their staff become familiar with coverage, coding, billing, and reimbursement for all preventive services covered by Medicare.
 - The MLN Preventive Services Educational Products Web Page ~ provides descriptions and ordering information for all provider specific educational products related to preventive services. The web page is located at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp on the CMS website.
 - The CMS Website provides information for each preventive service covered by Medicare. Click on www.cms.hhs.gov, select “Medicare”, and scroll down to “Prevention”.
- For products to share with your Medicare patients, visit www.medicare.gov on the Web.
- For more information about prostate cancer and Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, visit the following websites:
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/cancer/prostate
 - National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/
 - National Prostate Cancer Coalition www.fightprostatecancer.org

Thank you for joining with CMS to promote awareness of prostate cancer and the screening benefit covered by Medicare.

Flu Shot Reminder

September is the perfect time to start talking with your patients about getting the flu shot. Medicare provides coverage for the flu vaccine and its administration. Please encourage your Medicare patients to take advantage of this vital benefit. And don’t forget – health care professionals and their staff benefit from the flu vaccine also. **Protect Yourself. Protect Your Patients. Get Your Flu Shot.**