

Free Cancer Screenings Help Men Take Charge of Health

August 06, 2008 11:15 AM

Melanie Cross newwave@tulane.edu

One in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. Yet the death rate for prostate cancer is declining, possibly because more men are having tests to find the cancer early, when it is more treatable. A simple blood test for prostate cancer is being offered free this month at the Tulane Cancer Center.



Suzanne Murray, clinic manager for the Tulane Cancer Center Comprehensive Clinic, prepares a patient for his PSA blood test. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The Tulane Department of Urology and the cancer center are teaming up to offer free PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood tests on Tuesday, April 8, from 5 until 6 p.m. at the Tulane Cancer Center Comprehensive Clinic, 150 S. Liberty St.

PSA, or prostate-specific antigen, is a protein produced by the cells of the prostate gland. The test measures the level of PSA in the blood. It is normal for men to have low levels of PSA in their blood; however, prostate cancer or benign (non-cancerous) conditions can increase PSA levels.

The American Cancer Society recommends that men have regular PSA tests, along with digital rectal exams, beginning at age 50. These tests should be offered earlier for men at increased risk for prostate cancer, including those with a family history of prostate cancer or African-American men.

Participants will be asked to complete a short questionnaire regarding family history and to provide a small blood sample. Given time constraints, a prostate exam will not be offered at the free screenings.

All participants will be notified of their PSA test results via telephone and registered letter, and those requiring follow-up will be directed to see their physicians.

"If detected early, prostate cancer may be treated with a high probability of cure," says Dr. Oliver Sartor, Piltz Professor of Cancer Research in the Departments of Medicine and Urology. "Through our free screening program, we're trying to make it as convenient and painless as possible for the

Tulane University

men of our community to take charge of their health. A simple blood test can make a difference in terms of better understanding the risk of prostate cancer, and I encourage the wives, girlfriends and sisters out there to see that the men in their lives take advantage of this opportunity."

Prostate screening participants are invited to attend Tulane's Prostate Cancer Support Group meeting, scheduled the same evening from 6 until 8 p.m. in the Reily Pavilion adjacent to the Tulane Cancer Center. Dr. Raju Thomas, professor and chair of the Department of Urology, will present *Radical Prostatectomy: Experience Does Matter*.

Participants can ask questions of Tulane's prostate cancer experts as well as hear the stories of patients who have been through diagnosis and treatment for [prostate cancer](#).

"Tulane urology was the first in the Gulf South to offer free prostate cancer screening clinics, and in 1991 we started the state's first prostate cancer support group," Thomas says. "These community outreach programs have made a difference in many lives over the years."

No appointments are needed for the screening or the support group, and free parking is available in the Saratoga Parking Garage, located on Saratoga Street between Cleveland Street and Canal Street. For more information call 504-988-7869.

Melanie Cross is manager of communications for the Tulane Cancer Center.