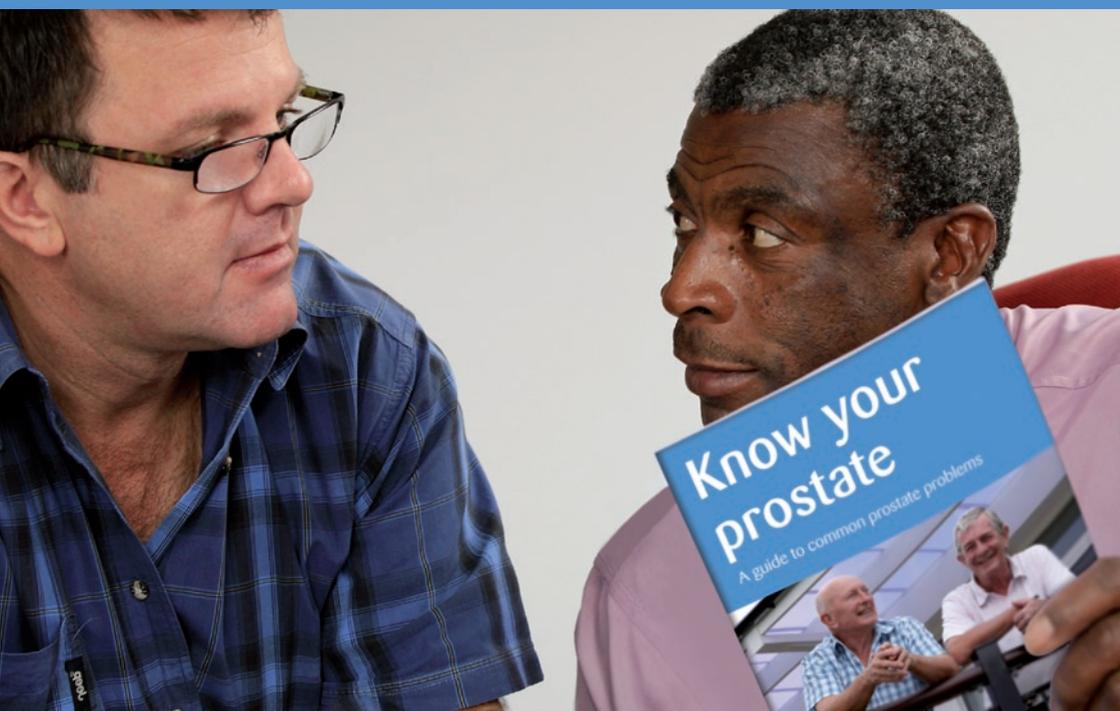


Testing Choices



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Our Testing Choices campaign aims to ensure that all men at higher risk of prostate cancer can access the balanced information and one-to-one support they need to make an informed choice about whether or not to have a PSA test.

What is Testing Choices trying to achieve?

Working out whether or not to have a PSA test is a 'testing choice.' Men need to weigh up a whole range of pros and cons before deciding if it's right for them.

To make an informed choice, men need to know about the test. Yet, research by The Prostate Cancer Charity shows that two thirds of men over 50 don't even know it exists.

Unfortunately, very little is being done by the NHS to improve men's awareness. The current programme for helping men think about the PSA test - the Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme - only helps men who already know about it.

The Charity believes this has to change. We need a programme that is able to reach every man who is at higher risk of prostate cancer, not just the few men who are already aware. To make this possible we need two things.

First, we need politicians and NHS officials to recognise the need for an improved programme that can help all men at higher risk of prostate cancer consider the pros and cons of the PSA test.

Second, we need to find out the best ways of communicating with men about the test. The Charity has developed a number of new ways of providing this information which it now needs to test.

Once the new approaches have been tested to find out which work best, we will then campaign for them to be rolled out across the country as part of an improved programme to raise awareness of the PSA test.

Which men are at higher risk of prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer mainly affects men over 50 and risk increases with age. Over 9 out of 10 prostate cancer cases are diagnosed in men aged 50 and over. Men are two and a half times more likely to develop prostate cancer if their father or brother has had it. African Caribbean men are also three times more likely to develop prostate cancer than white men of the same age.

For this reason, the Testing Choices campaign focuses on all men aged 50 and over and younger men who are African Caribbean and/or have a family history of prostate cancer.

What is the PSA test?

The PSA test is a blood test that can help diagnose prostate problems, including prostate cancer.

Why isn't there a national screening programme for prostate cancer at the moment?

The UK National Screening Committee has decided that the disadvantages of regularly screening every man over 50 for prostate cancer using the PSA test

outweigh the possible advantages¹. It has been found that screening can reduce the number of deaths from prostate cancer. But screening also leads to the over-diagnosis and possible over treatment of 'harmless' prostate cancers that wouldn't cause a man problems in his lifetime. At present, the Charity supports this position on screening. But we are keeping a close eye on developing research into screening for prostate cancer.

What is the current policy on PSA testing?

The UK Government also believes that all men are entitled to make an informed choice about whether they should have a PSA test, based on balanced information about its pros and cons. All men are entitled to have the test on the NHS if they want it.

The Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme (PCRMP) has been developed for use by GPs. If a man wants a PSA test he can ask his GP for one, and his doctor should give him balanced information². The PCRMP has been adopted by the Health Departments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If the Government supports men's right to an informed choice about whether or not to have a PSA test, why do we need this campaign?

The Charity believes that the PCRMP is not

working. The programme's messages are right but the way it is delivered is wrong. It only helps men who are already aware of prostate cancer and the PSA test. Men can only get information about the PSA test if they already know to ask their GP for it.

Two thirds of men over 50 are unaware of the PSA test and one in five GPs never talk about the PSA test with at-risk groups, unless they have potential symptoms of prostate cancer^{3,4}. However not all men with prostate cancer will have symptoms. This means that men are not able to make an informed choice about the PSA test.

The Charity believes that the UK needs an improved programme that provides information, in a better way, to men at higher risk about the PSA test and prostate cancer.

What improvements does the Charity want to see?

The Charity, in partnership with men over 50, health professionals and academics, has developed a number of new ways of providing men with information about the PSA test. We will be testing these new approaches over the next two years across the country.

The evidence from this work will help us develop a programme that better provides balanced information about the PSA test. We will then campaign for this programme to be put in place across the UK.

How do I support the campaign?

Please visit our website, www.prostate-cancer.org.uk/testing-choices, to learn more about Testing Choices and how you can support the campaign.

For more information on our work

Please contact our Policy and Campaigns team on **campaigns@prostate-cancer.org.uk** or visit **www.prostate-cancer.org.uk**

About The Prostate Cancer Charity

The Prostate Cancer Charity is the UK's leading charity working with people affected by prostate cancer. We fund research, provide support and information, and campaign to improve the lives of men with prostate cancer.

We campaign to improve prostate cancer healthcare services because we believe that people affected by prostate cancer should receive the highest standards of treatment and care, wherever they live.

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Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm, Wed 7pm - 9pm

www.prostate-cancer.org.uk

¹ See <http://www.screening.nhs.uk/cms.php?folder=3020>

² NHS Cancer Screening Programmes, 2009. Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme. Available at <http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/prostate/index.html>

³ ICM Research interviewed a random sample of 1,000 men aged 50+ by telephone in February 2011, on behalf of The Prostate Cancer Charity. Interviews were carried out to reflect the age and regional profiles of the over 50's male population in Britain.

⁴ Kantar Health interviewed conducted web based interviews on behalf of The Prostate Cancer Charity with 505 GPs from across the UK drawn from TNS healthcare professional panels in February 2011.

*Calls may be monitored for training purposes. Confidentiality is maintained between callers and The Prostate Cancer Charity.

The Prostate Cancer Charity is a charity registered in England and Wales (1005541) and Scotland (SC039332). Registered company 2653887.

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