



January 28, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Too Old to Test

The next comment on excessive testing concerns unnecessary prostate and breast cancer screening in people who are 65 and older. Based on the current U.S. census, that would be about 40 million Americans.

Researchers used data from the 2012 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey. This telephone survey is a minimum 190 questions and can be up to 410 questions. As the title suggests, it asks about all aspects of health from diet, exercise, previous conditions and diseases, and current conditions and diseases. The researchers were interested in the number of people 65 and older who responded to the survey, whether they had either a mammogram (women) or PSA test (men), and whether their life expectancy was at least 10 years. The number of respondents was close to 150,000 people.

The researchers found that just over half of those who took the survey had the gender-specific tests. Based on the calculations for 10-year life expectancy, they concluded that just over 30% were tested who wouldn't be expected to live another 10 years. Their point was that these tests are not necessary as they most likely will not affect the life expectancy of that 30%, in part because most tumors in women and men of this age group are slow growing. As in the comments from Tuesday, people could be subjected to more tests and treatments that might not affect how long they live. The estimated cost of over-diagnosing these diseases would be \$1.2 billion per year and would get worse as the population ages.



The critical factor is that the physician would have to discuss the screening tests with their patient and advise them to have the tests or not. The researchers admitted that there are no easy life-expectancy tests available at this time.

I'll tell you what I think on Saturday and believe me, it will be a message that you don't want to miss.

What are you prepared to do today?

### *Dr. Chet*

#### References:

1. <http://oncology.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=2482914>
2. <http://medicalresearch.com/cancer- -oncology/nearly-13-of-elderly-receive-non-recommended-cancer-screening-tests/20800/>

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