Reviewer's report

Title: Factors prompting PSA-testing of asymptomatic men in a country with no guidelines: A national survey of general practitioners

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Reviewer: Suzanne Steginga

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This study address an important question: why do General Practitioners continue to increasingly screen for prostate cancer in the absence of evidence to support this practice?

Strengths of the study are that it includes a large sample, the response rate is quite acceptable for a study of this kind (unsolicited survey), and the survey tool was relatively broad in scope. It is also of great interest that it as undertaken in a country that until recently has had no national policy on screening. It was also good to see that the issue of at what age GPs would screen patients was included and that there was some attempt to look at non-responders.

I am not sure I would agree with the conclusion that GPs test because of a belief in the utility of testing. The GPs had poor knowledge about prostate cancer; they were more likely to test if they had had a personal experience with prostate cancer detection in their practice or themselves personally (salient experience rather than evidence based decision). These findings would be better discussed with regard to the literature in non-systematic decision making and barriers to uptake of evidence based care. It is unfortunate that the authors didn’t test GP fear of medico-legal consequences as this may well be a strong predictor of behaviour. A comment that there was a high endorsement by GPs of the need for further education on this topic, this is worthy of note and discussion and recommendation by the authors.

Some possible references:


