Title: Population based prostate cancer screening in north Mexico reveals a high prevalence of aggressive tumors in detected cases

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Reviewer: John K Gohagan

Reviewer's report:

The authors seek to determine the prevalence and grade of prostate cancers among men from the urban population of Monterrey, Mexico.

973 men aged 40-98 years of age responding to public invitations via radio, TV and press were screened in three groupings (2004, 2005, 2006) following informed consent. 54% of the men presented with mild obstructive symptoms and 46% moderate to severe obstructive symptoms by the AUA-SI symptom index. Fifty-five of the 77 men with a PSA of 4ng/ml or above or with abnormal DRE underwent transrectal ultrasound guided biopsy, with a yield of 15 cancers, 14 of which were high grade (Gleason >= 7). Details of the findings test performance parameters are clearly presented. The authors observe that in many other screening settings (citing two European screening trials in which asymptomatic men were screened for comparison), prostate cancers detected tended to have lower Gleason score (Gleason 6 or lower) and state that for this difference they have no explanation while suggesting that it could be due to the lack of screening in the Mexican population they studied. The authors conclude that their series reflects low prevalence but high occurrence of high grade cancers.

The reported Mexican data should be reanalyzed in a population age-adjusted manner to draw conclusions about the prevalence of prostate cancer. The age distribution of subjects screened is not stated and prevalence among older men is substantially different than among younger men in all populations. In addition this was a symptomatic population which could affect their findings. It is not surprising that the authors reported higher Gleason grade than in the European comparisons cited, since prostate cancer progresses slowly to advanced stage with advancing age and they did not control for age or prior conditions whereas the Europeans did. A better comparison population for this project might have been the initial screening results reported for the Prostate, Lung, Colorectal, and Ovarian Cancer Screening Trial reported in JNCI 2005;97:433 or other results from this trial, because there is substantial Hispanic participation in PLCO, especially at the Colorado screening center.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.