

### Prostate Cancer Awareness month

By Elane Daly

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September is National Prostate Cancer Awareness month. In the United States this year, approximately 234,460 men will learn that they have prostate cancer, and nearly 27,350 will die from the disease. However, with annual screening, prostate cancer can be detected before it spreads, and survival rates approach 100 percent! Medically underserved men are at highest risk for prostate cancer, due to lack of screening for the disease.

While most prostate cancers cannot be prevented because of risk factors beyond a man's control (such as age, race and family history), there are steps that can be taken to reduce risk for the disease. Researchers believe, for example, that eating a high fiber, low-fat diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables daily can help reduce the risk for both prostate and colorectal cancers. The second and most effective way to reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer is to get checked for it every year, starting at age 50. African-American men and those with a family history of prostate cancer need to begin annual testing by age 45.

Prostate cancer, like most other cancers, usually has no symptoms in its early stages. With advanced disease, symptoms would typically involve difficulties with urination.

Screening for prostate cancer consists of two steps: a doctor's exam of the prostate gland and a blood test that measures a protein made by cells in the prostate. The blood test is called a PSA, which stands for "Prostate-Specific Antigen." High PSA levels in a man's blood indicate a prostate problem, but not necessarily cancer! Since neither of these screening techniques are 100 percent effective, it is the combination of the two that allows for the early detection of prostate cancer.

Next week, our health initiative known as the Cayuga County Healthy Men and Women Partnership together with the American Cancer Society, Auburn Memorial Hospital, several local physicians, TAP Pharmaceuticals, and Johnson & Johnson, Inc. will sponsor the fourth annual "Let's Talk About It" program. This event is intended to help medically uninsured and under-insured men 45 and older to learn more about prostate health and get screened for prostate cancer. At last year's event alone, 31 men were screened and one had a prostate problem detected.

To participate in the program, eligible men must pre-register by Sept. 11. Call Julie Delaney at the Cayuga County Department of Health and Human Services at 253-1455. Julie will discuss the qualifications for this free program with you when you call.

It is our sincere hope that this program will encourage men to be more proactive about their health and to be effective decision-makers where prostate and colorectal cancer screening is concerned. After all, prostate cancer is the second most common cancer found in American men next to skin cancer. And it is the most common cancer found in African-American men. At some point in their lives, one man in six will get prostate cancer.

We share the American Cancer Society's goal of eliminating cancer, saving lives and diminishing suffering from cancer through education and service.

#### TomatoFest

This year's TomatoFest will be held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, at Emerson Park on Owasco Lake in Auburn. The Cayuga County Department of Health & Human Services will be sponsoring several informational booths. There will also be craft, food and bazaar booths; live entertainment; a family fun tent; music; tomato fun; kids activities and workshops; amusement rides; artisan demonstrations; pasta dinner and ethnic foods, and a farmer's market. Adults are asked to give a \$3 donation, and children can either give a \$1 donation or enter for free with a canned food donation. Free parking will be at the Auburn High School with continuous free shuttle service to Emerson Park during festival hours. Hope to see you there.

Elane Daly is the director of Health & Human Services. If you have questions, call the Cayuga County Department of Health at 253-1560 or e-mail [cchealth@dfa.state.ny.us](mailto:cchealth@dfa.state.ny.us)