

Prostate Cancer: To Screen or Not?

By Eric Klein, MD, SELECT Study Coordinator

Two large studies published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* dated March 26, 2009, have fueled the debate about the value of routinely using PSA (prostate specific antigen) to screen for prostate cancer. It is generally accepted that for a screening test to be effective, those screened for a particular condition should be less likely to die of that condition than those not screened. In the 1990s investigators designed two studies. In the US, it was the Prostate, Lung, Colon and Ovary study (PLCO). In Europe, it was the European Randomized Screening Trial for Prostate Cancer (ERSPC). Both of the studies looked at the effectiveness of PSA-based screening on reducing the chances of dying from prostate cancer. The basic design of each study was similar. By random assignment, men entering either study would be screened regularly with PSA or not screened, and then they were followed. The studies compared the rates of death due to prostate cancer or other causes over the next 10 to 15 years.

The PLCO randomized 76,693 men to have an annual Digital Rectal Exam (DRE) for 4 years and annual PSA testing for 6 years. They recommended a biopsy for a PSA value of greater than 4. After 6 years, more prostate cancers were detected in the men in the screening group than in the control group. However, there was no difference in the likelihood of dying of prostate cancer between those assigned to screening and those not assigned to screening. Likewise, in the ERSPC trial, more cancers were diagnosed in those who underwent screening than those who did not get screened. However, unlike in the PLCO, men in the ERSPC who were assigned to routine screening had a 20% reduction in the risk of dying of prostate cancer.

There were important differences between the two trials that may explain the findings. Routine screening in the general population was more widespread in the US at the time these studies began. For example, 40% of the men entering PLCO had already had a PSA test at least once in their lifetime. The time between PSA screenings differed between the trials. The men in the PLCO trial were screened every year. Men in the ERSPC study were screened less frequently. These differences suggest that the men entering the PLCO trial were at lower risk for developing prostate cancer. In the PLCO trial, more than half (52%) of the men who were assigned to the non-screening group actually got at least one PSA during the course of trial. This makes the comparison between death rates in the two arms less meaningful, since it was not a true test of screening vs. no screening.

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Reminder! Contact Your Study Site Staff If:
SELECT Publications

CHOICE - The Newsletter for SELECT Men, is published by the Southwest Oncology Group for participants in the **Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial (SELECT)**. The purpose of the newsletter is to help you stay informed about SELECT and general health issues.

General health information published in *CHOICE* is not intended to serve as a recommendation on personal medical matters or to substitute as advice from your physician. Consult your physician for any personal health problems.

The newsletter is supported by Grant CA37429 from the National Cancer Institute.

Forward your comments, questions or suggestions to SELECTnewsletter@crab.org or by mail to:

SELECT Newsletter
1730 Minor Ave., Suite 1900
Seattle, WA 98101-1468

Prostate Cancer: To Screen or Not? (Continued from page 1)

The different conclusions of these trials have not settled the debate about prostate cancer screening. One thing that is clear—screening does identify many cancers that are not harmful and may not need to be treated. A major limitation of screening is the inability, at the time of diagnosis, to distinguish between cancers that are possibly lethal (which require treatment) and those which are not lethal and may not require treatment. Except for the highest grade tumors (determined at surgery), which represent a minority of newly diagnosed cancers, there is currently no physical exam, x-ray, blood test or other test to tell the difference between those possibly lethal cancers and those that are not lethal.

Statistics show that more than 90% of the men in the US with newly diagnosed prostate cancer choose immediate treatment rather than initial observation.

This results in many men experiencing the side effects of treatment. And all treatments have side effects.

What does all of this mean? The choice to be screened for prostate cancer remains a personal one. You should have a thorough understanding of the potential risks and benefits. This is best achieved through education, reputable books and Web sites, and discussion with a physician who is familiar with the issues and the latest data.

Recommended Web sites:

American Cancer Society: <http://www.cancer.org/>

Cleveland Clinic: <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/>

National Institute of Health: <http://nih.gov/>

SELECT Participants Among the First to Learn Study Findings

The letter you received last fall announcing the study findings was the result of careful planning and thoughtful discussion by study leadership and staff. Once the study leadership met and agreed with the recommendation from the Data and Safety Monitoring Committee (DSMC) to stop the study supplements because they did not prevent prostate cancer, they sought the advice of the National Participant Advisory Board (NPAB). They asked the NPAB how best to inform participants of the findings of the trial. The NPAB's response was clear: tell participants clearly and quickly about the findings.

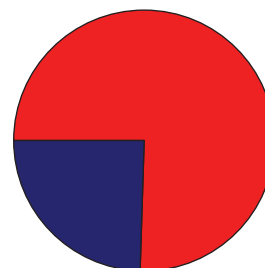
With assistance from the NPAB, the leadership and staff drafted the letter and, in less than two weeks, printed and shipped over 30,000 letters to approximately 400 Study Sites throughout North America. Only your Study Site has your personal contact information; therefore, your Study Site had the responsibility for mailing you the letter. Study Site staff received special training from the leadership on the study findings, enabling them to be ready to answer your questions.

Getting important news to over 30,000 people was a big challenge, but one that the leadership and staff carried out rapidly. All Study Sites received their letters within three weeks after the leadership decided to stop the study supplements. Study Sites acted quickly to get those letters in your hands. Nearly 90% of Study Sites mailed the letters within two weeks after receiving them and all Study Sites had mailed them by 11 weeks. You may

also have received a phone call from your Study Site before getting your letter in the mail. While the letters were being prepared, the SELECT leadership learned that CBS News had heard about the findings and planned a broadcast. The leadership asked every Study Site to make an effort to contact their participants before that broadcast, so that you would hear the news from your Study Site first. Study Sites who responded to a survey about this task reported some success: 61% of them said they were able to contact at least some of their participants (see chart below).

Throughout the notification process, one common thread reported by Study Sites is how appreciative and supportive participants have been despite the findings that study supplements did not prevent prostate cancer. SELECT has always been about teamwork: your support of the study, and the study's commitment to you, will enable us to continue to answer important questions about men's health.

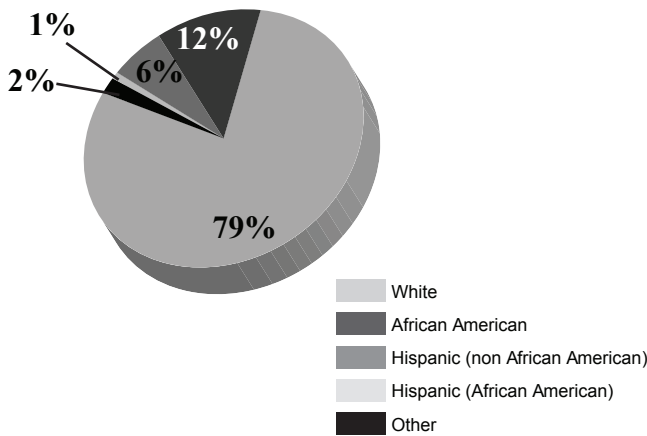
241 (61%) of 396 Study Sites Contacted Their Participants Prior to the Newscast



- 182 (76%) were able to contact at least some participants prior to the CBS broadcast
- 59 (24%) were unable to contact any participants prior to the CBS broadcast

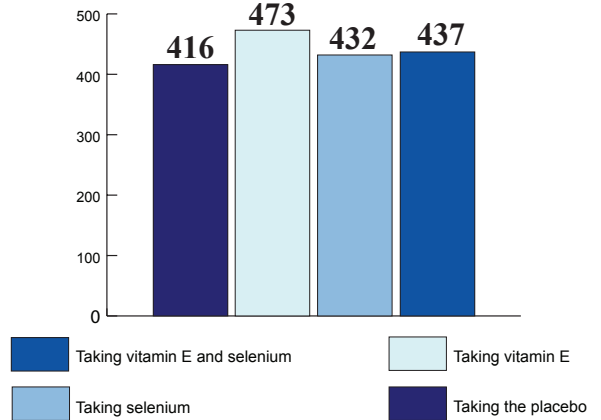
What Can We Tell You Now?

Participant Race and Ethnicity



Race and ethnicity data are based on self report by the participant. SELECT recruited the largest percentage of African American participants ever randomized to a cancer prevention trial.

Number of Participants Diagnosed with Prostate Cancer



The number of participants with prostate cancer is fairly evenly distributed among the four arms of the study.

We're In This Together

Let's Stay the Course!

By Larry W. Crandall, NPAB Member and SELECT Participant

Throughout my lifetime I have been told that if what we experience is both true and important, then it is a story that needs to be told. SELECT is such a story and it should be told. The interesting thing is all of us who are participants in SELECT are part of this story. We are from a generation that was taught to “stay the course.”

But, what if the course changes? SELECT is now at such a juncture. As participants in SELECT, we have been instructed to stop taking the SELECT study supplements. At the same time, we were informed SELECT is not over—it is merely entering into another chapter as it continues.

It is reassuring to have a dedicated, experienced and passionate staff who keep us informed. We know SELECT and the ancillary studies are continuing.

Our generation not only stays the course, we also want to see results when we put time, money and effort into something. By remaining with SELECT and seeing the study to the end, we will continue to contribute important information in support of men's health.

This is a very important time for us to keep informed. Continuing to be part of the study provides the opportunity

for us and our families to acquire a greater understanding of the issues related to prostate cancer, as well as the other studies available through our participation in SELECT.

I encourage you to read each issue of *CHOICE – The Newsletter for SELECT Men*. *CHOICE* is always a great source of information that contains articles concerning prostate health and other health-related issues. *CHOICE* often includes important information about the ancillary studies connected to SELECT.

For those who have access to a computer, another source of information concerning SELECT is the SELECT public Web site. The purpose of this Web site is to provide participants and their family members with up-to-date information about the study, people and organizations who are involved. The Web site is located at www.crab.org/select. The Web site was recently updated to make it more user friendly. More information about the SELECT Web site is on page 4 in this issue of *CHOICE*.

Remember—we are *all* SELECT!

We are in this together.

It is our study. *Let's stay the course!*

Do You Know?

- ... where to find facts and updated information about SELECT?
- ... who is on the SELECT National Participant Advisory Board (NPAB) and what the NPAB does?
- ... how to locate articles about SELECT?
- ... where to find Web sites for the Cancer Information Service or National Cancer Institute?

Do you know that you can find all of the above and more in one easy-to-use Web site designed especially for you?

It's new—just for you!


In January 2009, the NPAB met at the SELECT Statistical Center in Seattle, Washington, and talked about changing the SELECT Web site to make it more useful for all SELECT participants. The result? A Web site that is easy to use, features current study news, and links to information about prostate cancer and other cancers.

Using the SELECT Web site

To access the Web site, just type **www.crab.org/select** in your Internet browser. It is simple to use. For example, you will find links to information on the home page (shown below), which opens when you go to the SELECT Web site address. Click on the white text links at the top of the page to see more pages.



Click on the white text links here to see more pages.



Home
Study Sites
Ancillary Studies
NPAB
FAQs
Related Links

About SELECT

SELECT stands for the Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial, a clinical trial to see if one or both of these substances can help prevent prostate cancer when taken as dietary supplements.
[More . . .](#)

SELECT Publications

Members of the SELECT leadership have written many publications on SELECT for scientific journals. A list of articles is available and the list is updated as publications are available to the public. There are also helpful hints on how to locate the journals if you would like to read any of the articles.
[More . . .](#)

Prostate Cancer Awareness Events

SELECT Study Sites and the National Cancer Institute hold upcoming events to educate the public and provide support to prostate cancer patients and their friends and families.
[List of upcoming events and links to event sites](#)

Current Updates

Updated: April 2009

IMPORTANT STUDY INFORMATION!
[October 2008]

The SELECT Data and Safety Monitoring Committee (DSMC) met in September 2008 to review the data to date. Thanks to each and every participant, enough data were available to make a decision about the effectiveness of the Study Supplements. The data showed that 200 mcg of selenium and 400 IUs daily of vitamin E do not prevent prostate cancer. Investigators from the study leadership and the National Cancer Institute agreed with the DSMC findings. Participants in SELECT should continue taking their Study Supplements.
[More . . .](#)

Quick Links:

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[Study Sites](#)
[Ancillary Studies](#)
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[Related Links](#)

[SELECT Publications](#)
[SELECT Q and A](#)
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To read details about one of the topics on the home page, click on a **More . . .** text link.

Click on the blue text links under **Quick Links** to see more pages and information.

For your convenience, you can also use the text links at the bottom of the home page to go to other pages. You'll find these same links, as well as the links at the top of the home page, repeated on every page. (Note, a few links open pages on other Web sites, such as the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the Cancer Information Service. Pages from Web sites outside of the SELECT Web site will open in a new browser window so your SELECT Web site page remains open.)

To see the *About SELECT*, *SELECT Publications*, *Current Updates*, or *Prostate Cancer Awareness Events* pages, click on the blue text link **More . . .** under the topic of your choice. Clicking on one of these links opens that topic's page. For example, clicking on **More . . .** under *About SELECT* opens an NCI Web page listing 25 questions and answers about SELECT. Clicking on **More . . .** under *Current Updates* displays the entire *Important Study Information* article.

Meet your National Participant Advisory Board (NPAB) representatives by clicking on **NPAB** at the top of the page. On this page you find information about the NPAB and a photo of the NPAB representatives. Interested in learning

more about one of the representatives? Click on his image and his page opens. You will find a handy link on this page back to the main NPAB page or, if you want to find different information, click on one of the other topic links, such as **Ancillary Studies** or **Related Links**.

Are you planning to move and want to see if there is a SELECT Study Site near your new home? Click on **Study Sites** at the top or bottom of the page. The *SELECT Study Sites* page opens (shown below). To locate a Study Site, click on the drop-down arrow and select a state or Canadian province. A list of Study Sites in that state or province will appear. If you need to transfer to one of these sites, let your current Study Site know which one you are interested in and they will initiate a transfer for you.

Explore the SELECT Web site at www.crab.org/select today to see how easy it is to find updated information about SELECT with just a few clicks of your computer mouse. Come back frequently to check for current news about SELECT in the *Current Updates* area. Watch for new articles about SELECT, which will be added to the *SELECT Publications* list as they are published. Because the SELECT Web site will be updated regularly, be sure to visit often!

SELECT Study Sites

If you are in the process of moving or transferring to another SELECT Study Site by state or province using the drop-down list below.

State:

Below is a list of SELECT Study Sites and contact personnel for Alaska.

To print this page choose "Print" from your Web browser's File menu.

Kathleen Wilsack Shue RN, OCN
 (907) 212-3109
 Providence Alaska Medical Center
 3200 Providence Dr
 Anchorage, AK 99508
 Ancillary Studies: PREADVICE

Hannah B. Smith BSN, RN
 (907) 458-6985
 Fairbanks Memorial Hospital
 1650 Cowles Street
 Fairbanks, AK 99701
 Ancillary Studies: PREADVICE and SEE

Quick Links:
[Home](#) [Study Sites](#) [Ancillary Studies](#) [NPAB](#) [FAQs](#) [Related Links](#)
[SELECT Publications](#) [SELECT Q & A](#) [Upcoming Events](#) [Past Current Updates Archive](#)

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Reminder! Contact Your Study Site Staff If:



You are planning a move. Update your contact information with your new address and phone numbers. If your new home is not close to your current Study Site, the staff there will help you find another Study Site in the area of your new home.

You have a major change in your health. If you are hospitalized or are incapacitated for some length of time, the staff at your Study Site will make arrangements so you can continue to participate in the study to the extent that is possible for you.

You have a change in lifestyle. For example, events such as a death in the family, job loss or natural disasters can certainly disrupt your general routine. Your Study Site staff will be glad to work with you to stay in contact until you are ready to fully participate in SELECT again.

SELECT Publications

The most recent article about SELECT was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. “Selenium and Vitamin E for Prevention of Prostate Cancer: The Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial (SELECT)” is available online at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/2008.864>.

Members of the SELECT leadership have written other publications about SELECT for scientific journals. An updated list of articles is available on the SELECT Web site www.crab.org/select.

There are several ways you can obtain a copy or read a copy of an article in a journal:

- Obtain an on-line (computer) or hard-copy subscription for the journal in which the article has been published.
- Go to any local library or a local medical school library and ask to see an on-line or hard copy of a journal.
- Ask the staff or physician at your Study Site if they have a copy of the journal and would let you read the article.

Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial (SELECT)