

## Jamaican Men Avoiding Prostate Screening

Too few Jamaican men are being tested for prostate cancer, says Dr. William Aiken, consulting urologist at the University Hospital of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica.

Data from the Jamaica Cancer Society (JCS) showed that the organization screened more than 20,000 women for breast and cervical cancer last year, he said. In the same period, fewer than 500 men were tested for prostate cancer.

"The JCS data give us some idea about the discrepancy in screening behavior in men and women," Dr. Aiken said. He added that the split was also despite the fact that the tests for prostate cancer are simple and quick procedures.

"Prostate cancer can occur in men who are in their late 80's and 90's," he said. Those men will not die from the cancer, but from other illnesses.

The cancer often takes a very dangerous form for men in their 40's and 50's 60's who develop it. He stated that if left untreated, it will kill the patient, generally within 15 years.

"We are interested in the cancers which occur in these younger men," he said. "The cancers will definitely result in the death of these men if they are not found and treated."

Prostate cancer is the most common cause of cancer related death among Jamaican men, he said. However, it does not tend to show symptoms in the early stage.

"We recommend that screening begin at age 40," Mrs. Carol Blair, JCS Administrative Director said after a briefing at the JCS office in Kingston recently. She said Jamaican men have the option of doing two simple tests that would detect prostate cancer early and allow it to be cured.

"We want to ensure that people exercise responsibility for their health," she said. The number of men tested is increasing but from a low base and at a slow pace.