

That dreaded prostate test

Completing the dreaded prostate test is a fear many Jamaican men don't want to confront. Prostate cancer is no joke, and so getting tested is important, but the method of testing has resulted in many men postponing or foregoing the "torture".

The first concern that comes up when the prostate test issue arises, is the stigma which many Jamaican men attach to the procedure. This stigma seems to be rooted in the aversion they have to any "unnatural" contact with their buttocks. Many feel that it is unmanly to have a doctor do the finger-insert test, and not only that, they feel that the entire process is humiliating and embarrassing. But while it may be embarrassing, I'm sure if you had to choose between the embarrassment and developing cancer, you would choose the former in an instant. A prostate test can be a life-saving test, as it can detect the possibility of a cancerous tumour from an early stage. And newsflash, prostate cancer is the commonest cancer in Jamaican men. It represents 36.5 per cent of all male cancers in Jamaica. In addition, it represents the leading cause of male cancer deaths in Jamaica. Black men are also more at risk. Data from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean suggests that prostate cancer is the commonest male cancer. In the United States, prostate cancer is almost twice more common in black men than white men. I think many men are afraid of the ridicule they think they will face from their peers if somehow they find out that they had the test done. And as we all know, men are very protective of their egos and this is one issue that they think would bring their manhood into question. This is a strange way of thinking, though, as lots of men have stripped naked in front of doctors to be examined without this type of aversion. We Jamaican men need to be real about the issue of prostate cancer and do what is necessary to protect ourselves. What I can say is that for whatever reason you choose not to do the test, you should examine if that reason is important enough to put your life at risk. Having thought about it, I'm sure you will realise that no reason can be that important. The procedure is not painful and lasts less than two minutes. And if you don't tell someone that you've done it, who else but your doctor will know?