

Public release date: 22-Nov-2011

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## Moffitt Cancer Center researchers find men less willing to be screened for cancer

TAMPA, Fla. -- Although men have higher cancer mortality rates than women, they are less willing to be screened for cancer, according to a study conducted by researchers at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Fla., and colleagues at Sanoa Consulting LLC, Muscle Shoals, Ala., and the New York University College of Dentistry.

The study, which was funded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research/National Institutes of Health, was conducted in New York City, Baltimore, Maryland and San Juan, Puerto Rico, through a random-dial telephone survey of 1,148 adult African Americans, whites, and Puerto Rican Hispanics who answered questions from the Cancer Screening Questionnaire. The majority of those surveyed were 30 to 59 years of age. The study has been released online and will be published in an upcoming issue of the *American Journal of Men's Health*.

"This study examined beliefs and attitudes held by men and women about cancer screening," said study corresponding author Jenna L. Davis, M.P.H., of Moffitt's Department of Health Outcomes and Behavior. "Our aim was to gain insight for improving existing cancer health promotion practices. Our findings indicate that there is a need for better health and cancer screening promotion among men."

The researchers suggested that the screening participation gap between men (who accounted for 35 percent of those surveyed) and women may be related to several factors. For example, more cancer awareness promotions in the media are aimed at women's breast cancer; there is a lack of government sponsored men's cancer awareness campaigns; and studies indicate that women visit their primary care doctors more often than do men.

According to co-author B. Lee Green, Ph.D., Moffitt senior member and the vice president of Moffitt Diversity, there is far less coverage in the media of men's cancers. For example, the authors cite a previous study showing that mammography is more often mentioned in newspaper articles than the prostate specific antigen (PSA), the screening tool for prostate cancer.

"There are many fundraisers, commercials and community awareness events about women's cancers, such as breast cancer," said Green. "For example, the National Football League allows players to wear pink during October Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The Prostate Cancer Foundation has only recently petitioned the NFL to recognize National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month by allowing players to wear blue in September."

The authors also note that within national government agencies, men's health promotions are lacking. While the National Institutes of Health has an Office of Research on Women's Health, there is no such office for men's health.

Another variable may be that women are more frequent consumers of health care.

"Women generally have more ongoing and routine visits to their primary care doctors than men," said Davis. "They are more likely to be screened during these visits."

The study concluded that when men are provided with the details of screening procedures – who conducts the screening, what men have to do – men were slightly more likely to participate in cancer screening than women.

"This strongly suggests that men will participate in screening when given more information about screening procedures," concluded Davis. "This means that health educators, physicians and community-based organizations should make a concerted effort to educate men on exact screening procedures, explain how cancer is detected, and communicate what to expect during screening."

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Located in Tampa, Florida, Moffitt Cancer Center is an NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center – a designation that recognizes Moffitt's excellence in research and contributions to clinical trials, prevention and cancer control. Moffitt currently has 14 affiliates in Florida, one in Georgia, one in Pennsylvania and two in Puerto Rico. Additionally, Moffitt is a member of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, a prestigious alliance of the country's leading cancer centers, and is listed in *U.S. News & World Report* as one of "America's Best Hospitals" for cancer. Moffitt marks a very important anniversary in 2011 – 25 years committed to one mission: to contribute to the prevention and cure of cancer.

Media release by Florida Science Communications

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