

B30

The ProtecT (Prostate testing for cancer and Treatment) study: advanced cases found through a screening study in the UK

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Establishing the effectiveness of treatment in screen-detected cases remains central to the introduction of screening as a public health policy for prostate cancer. We are undertaking a large multi-centre trial of treatment preceded by PSA-detected case-finding for localised prostate cancer (the ProtecT trial). The purpose of this study was to define the characteristics of men with advanced disease identified following PSA testing in the UK.

Men aged 50-69 years in 9 regions of the UK are invited for PSA testing, with a view to entering a RCT of treatment if they have localised prostate cancer. We have reviewed the characteristics of men with advanced disease identified through this programme who were excluded from the treatment trial.

By October 2005, 59,491 men received PSA tests, 5,665 had a raised PSA level >3ng/ml (9.5%), 1,566 cancers were detected and 1356 (~85%) had early localised disease. We have now characterised 210 of the men with locally advanced prostate cancer ineligible for the ProtecT treatment trial. The 210 men with locally advanced disease were most commonly initially treated with androgen ablation & radiotherapy, or androgen ablation alone.

Metastatic disease was found in 23 cases; 8 men were found to have nodal metastases, 13 with bone metastases & 2 with nodal & bone metastases.

Implementing a policy of screening for prostate cancer in the UK through PSA testing would thus lead to the detection of locally advanced or metastatic disease in ~15% of cases identified.

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