Refusing Cancer Surgery Lowers Survival Rates

Men who refuse surgery for prostate cancer and instead opt for monitoring progression without undergoing treatment have a significantly worse long-term survival rate than those patients that choose radiotherapy, according to researchers at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. The study found that patients who refused any treatment for their prostate cancer had a 10-year overall survival rate of 51 percent, compared to 68 percent for those who chose radiation treatment.

“Surgery has been shown to offer a survival advantage to patients with prostate cancer when compared with other treatment options. However, a significant number of patients refuse surgery and instead opt for other treatments such as radiotherapy,” says study lead author Naveen Pokala, M.D., an urologist at Henry Ford Hospital.

These findings follow a study published by Dr. Pokala in 2009 that showed surgery improves 5, 10 and 15-year survival rates for men younger than 50 with moderately and especially in poorly differentiated prostate cancers, when compared with other standard treatments such as radiation therapy or watchful waiting.

The new research, a population-based analysis of 9,704 patients chosen from the National SEER database, looked at survival rates among men with a mean age of 64.4 years, of whom 77 percent were white and 16.4 percent black. Of that group, nearly 30 percent refused any treatment for their prostate cancers, and about 70 percent chose radiation therapy.

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