

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Seeks Comment on Its Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening for Carotid Artery Stenosis

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 18, 2014 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted its draft recommendation statement and draft evidence report on screening adults for carotid artery stenosis (CAS), recommending against screening in the general adult population. The Task Force is providing an opportunity for public comment on this draft recommendation statement until March 17. All public comments will be considered as the Task Force develops its final recommendation statement.

Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability in the United States and can be devastating to those affected. CAS—the narrowing of the arteries that run along both sides of the neck and provide blood flow to the brain—is one of many risk factors for stroke.

After reviewing the evidence, the Task Force has issued a draft recommendation against screening for CAS in the general adult population. This is a D recommendation. Adults with a history of stroke, transient ischemic attack (“mini-stroke”), or signs and symptoms of stroke are not included in this recommendation.

“CAS is uncommon in the general adult population, so screening everyone would lead to many false positive results, and this can lead to follow-up tests and surgery that carry risk of serious harms, including stroke, heart attack, and death,” says Task Force member Jessica Herzstein, M.D., M.P.H. False positive results are when a test shows that a person has a condition that he or she does not actually have.

“The good news is that we have ways to reduce the risk of a stroke: control blood pressure and cholesterol, don’t smoke, be physically active, and eat a healthful diet,” says Task Force co-vice chair Michael LeFevre, M.D., M.S.P.H.

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement has been posted for public comment on the Task Force Web site at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from February 18 to March 17, 2014 at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/tfcomment.htm.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

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