

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening for Pancreatic Cancer

Task Force continues to recommend against screening for pancreatic cancer in adults

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 5, 2019 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review on screening for pancreatic cancer. Based on the current evidence, the Task Force again recommends that adults without signs or symptoms should not be screened for pancreatic cancer. **This is a D recommendation.** This recommendation does not apply to adults who are at high risk for the disease.

Grade in this recommendation:

D: Not recommended.

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While pancreatic cancer is uncommon, it is a deadly disease. It is the third most common cause of cancer death in the United States. In most cases, pancreatic cancer is not found early enough to be treated effectively, and the likely outcomes are poor. Even when the cancer is found early and treated with surgery, the average survival is only 36 months.

“Although pancreatic cancer is rare, it is a devastating disease with low survival rates,” says Task Force member Chyke Doubeni, M.D., M.P.H. “Unfortunately, we do not currently have an effective test to screen for pancreatic cancer.”

The Task Force did not find any evidence that screening for pancreatic cancer improves patient outcomes. Some tests that look for pancreatic cancer are invasive and can lead to pain, adverse reactions to anesthesia, false-positive results, and sometimes pancreatitis. If pancreatic cancer is found, followup treatment such as pancreatectomy, or surgery to remove all or a portion of the pancreas, can have significant harms, including bleeding, weeks of recovery time, and a small risk of death.

“New effective screening tests are needed that can find pancreatic cancer earlier,” says Task Force member Chien-Wen Tseng, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.E.E. “We also need better treatments that can lead to improved survival or a cure with fewer harms.”

This draft recommendation statement, which recommends against screening for pancreatic cancer, is consistent with the 2004 Task Force recommendation. No other organizations recommend screening for pancreatic cancer in the general population of adults with no signs or symptoms.

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement and draft evidence review have been posted for public comment on the Task Force Web site at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from February 5, 2019 to March 4, 2019 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.

Dr. Doubeni is the Harrison McCrea Dickson, M.D., and Clifford C. Baker, M.D., presidential professor and an associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He is

also a senior scholar at the Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Tseng is the Hawaii Medical Service Association endowed chair in health services and quality research, a professor, and the associate research director in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine.

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