

Population Screening Act: screening for prostate cancer

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Executive summary

Health Council of the Netherlands



The Public Health department of the Erasmus MC in Rotterdam intends to perform a population-based screening pilot for prostate cancer with serum prostate-specific-antigen (PSA) testing. Based on the Population Screening Act, a permit is required for this screening pilot. The Committee on Population Screening of the Health Council evaluated the permit application and advises the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) not to grant the permit.

Permit application

The researchers would like to conduct a population-based screening pilot in which 12.000 men between the ages of 55 and 59 years are offered PSA testing. The researchers would like an answer to five research questions related to informed decision, uptake, collaboration and logistics, follow-up of the

treatment policy and the degree of opportunistic screening.

Review against WBO requirements

Scientific validity

The committee concludes that the scientific validity of the proposed population-based screening pilot is insufficient. The chosen study design or method is not suitable for answering the research questions. Furthermore, the hypothesis that this population-based screening pilot will reduce opportunistic screening is insufficiently substantiated.

Risk-benefit ratio

The committee concludes that the benefits do not outweigh the risks for the participants. The benefits are limited, while the risks of overdiagnosis, overtreatment and psychological burden are considerable.

Alignment with professional medical practice standards

The committee concludes that the population-based screening pilot does not comply with the standards for medical practice because the information to the participants is incomplete and not objective.



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