Committee to Hold Hearing on Prostate Cancer Screening and Treatment

Actor Louis Gossett, Jr. to provide testimony on his personal battle with prostate cancer

WASHINGTON – Recent debates about the efficacy of screening for prostate cancer have sparked new concerns about both screening and treatment for the disease. To address these issues and to review the latest developments in screening and treatment for prostate cancer, and ongoing research, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will hold a hearing on Thursday, March 4, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building entitled, "Prostate Cancer: New Questions About Screening and Treatment."

Prostate cancer is a form of cancer that develops in the prostate, a gland in the male reproductive system. The cancer cells may metastasize (spread) from the prostate to other parts of the body, particularly the bones and lymph nodes. Currently, scientists do not know what causes prostate cancer. Effective cancer treatment has long been predicated on early detection and treatment. However, this long-held tenet is now being debated. In October 2009, The New York Times reported that the American Cancer Society (ACS), which has long been a proponent of most cancer screening, is now saying that the benefits of detecting many cancers, especially breast and prostate, have been overstated. The ACS now takes the position that screening for breast and prostate cancer can come with a real risk of over treating many small cancers while missing cancers that are deadly.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) takes the position that "the benefits of screening and local therapy (surgery or radiation therapy) for early prostate cancer remain unclear, and it is not known for certain whether prostate cancer screening saves lives." For that reason, NCI is supporting research to assess the risks of screening and to determine whether screening with prostate specific antigen (PSA) tests and digital rectal exams (DREs) reduces the death rate from this disease.

In response to this controversy, the American Urological Association (AUA) has stated that it "strongly supports early prostate cancer detection and feels it is in a man's best interest to consider being tested for prostate cancer. Prostate cancer is most treatable when caught early…" The AUA strongly supports informed consent, including a discussion about the benefits and risks of testing, before screening is undertaken."

In addition to focusing on prostate screening and treatment controversy, and current research efforts, representatives from the National Cancer Institute and the U.S. Army Medical Research and Material Command will discuss their respective prostate cancer research programs.

The following witnesses are scheduled to testify:

Lou Gossett, Jr., Actor and Prostate Cancer Victim

Carolyn J.M. Best, Ph.D., Program Manager, Prostate Cancer Research Program, Department of Defense, U.S. Army Medical Research and Material Command, Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs

Otis W. Brawley, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, American Cancer Society.

William L. Dahut, M.D., Senior Investigator, National Cancer Institute, Medical Oncology Branch and Affiliates

Theodore L. DeWeese, M.D., Professor of Radiation Oncology and Molecular Radiation Sciences, Professor of Urology, Professor Oncology, Chairman, Radiation Oncologist-in-Chief, Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center, Johns Hopkins Hospital

Thomas Farrington, President and Founder, Prostate Health Education Network, Inc.

Betty Gallo co-founder of Women Against Prostate Cancer (her husband, the late Congressman Dean A. Gallo, died of the disease in 1994).

Dr. Steven G. Kaminsky, Ph.D., Vice President for Research and Director of Research Administration, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Center for Prostate Disease Research (CPDR)

James L. Mohler, M.D., Associate Director and Senior Vice President for Translation Research, Chair, Department of Urologic Oncology, Department of Urology at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute

Faina Shtern, M.D., President and Chief Executive Officer, AdMeTech Foundatio