

# PCRI Weekly

Your source for what's new in the world of prostate cancer research



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## Dying from Prostate Cancer: Less Risky Than You May Think

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Prostate cancer treatment is controversial because **although the death rates associated with it are low compared to other cancers, the side effects from treatment are much worse.**

Also, since elderly men die more frequently from other causes, calculating the actual risk of death is like calculating the risk of a moving target. The longer you live, the greater your risk is of dying from prostate cancer.

An alternative to viewing this confusing situation is to report the annual risk of prostate cancer death, or **hazard ratio**, depending on the number of years from surgery.

This month's *Journal of Urology* reported the hazard rates in 127,000 men treated with surgery, depending on the stage and grade of their cancer at the time of surgery. Unfortunately, the results were not reported using D'Amico risk categories, due to a lack of sufficient PSA data.

To give you a general idea of the risk of dying at a fixed point 15 years after surgery, the authors reported the following figures:

1. For the whole group of 127,000 men, the prostate cancer mortality rate at 15 years was 10%.
2. Men in the best risk category (i.e. with only a small nodule palpable on digital rectal exam and a Gleason score of 7 or less - termed Group I) had a 5% chance for prostate cancer mortality at 15 years.
3. For men in the worst group with seminal vesicle invasion, lymph node metastasis or Gleason scores of 8 or above had a 27% risk of prostate cancer mortality at 15 years.

What made this study unique was the researchers' method of reporting the annual hazard of prostate cancer death. In other words, the risk of dying from prostate cancer for each year of life lived. These risks were reported for four groups, but for simplicity, only the best and worst groups are presented here:

1. For Group I, the annual risk of dying from prostate cancer increased from one-fifth of one percent starting five years after surgery, up to one-half of one percent 15 years after surgery.
2. For the men in Group IV the annual risk of prostate cancer death ranged from one and a half percent, starting five years after surgery and ranging up to three and three quarters percent annually 15 years after surgery.

**Takeaway Message:** The good news is that the risk of dying from prostate cancer is pretty low, especially if you have Low-Risk prostate cancer. However, the longer you live, the more your risk of dying from prostate cancer increases.

## What is PCRI Weekly?

PCRI Weekly is an **e-newsletter** brought to you by the **Prostate Cancer Research Institute (PCRI)**, publisher of *Insights* magazine.

Each issue of PCRI Weekly provides a summary of a recent study or issue of concern, and a takeaway message from PCRI's executive director, Dr. Mark Scholz, explaining how this research can best be interpreted by a man with prostate cancer.

## What's Your SHADE?



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**Questions?** Please contact PCRI Senior Writer-Editor Madhu Rajaraman at [madhu@pcri.org](mailto:madhu@pcri.org).

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