



UROLOGICAL SOCIETY OF  
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Media Release, 16 November 2010

## Urologists concerned new book may confuse men about prostate cancer tests

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand is concerned a new book which casts doubt on the benefits of testing for prostate cancer may cause confusion and wants to remind men that *detection of prostate cancer does save lives*.

“We are disappointed that this book, “Let Sleeping Dogs Lie” to be launched in Sydney on Thursday, will add to the confusion rather than lift the fog. There is no data to prove that testing for and treatment of prostate cancer does more harm than good.”

Each year upwards of 3,300 men in Australia and New Zealand die as a result of prostate cancer – greater than the number of women who die from breast cancer.

The Urological Society President Dr David Malouf said “the irrefutable fact is that an Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test, in conjunction with a digital rectal examination (DRE), is currently the best indicator of whether a man may have the cancer and that early cancer treatment does save lives.”

Importantly it enables early, appropriate treatment that leads to the best results in terms of both cancer and quality of life outcomes.

“Most men will be reassured by the test that their risk of prostate cancer is low. For others, a subsequent prostate biopsy may identify those aggressive cancers requiring early treatment. Many low risk tumours will not require treatment and can be managed with Active Surveillance or observation in the medium to long term. This individualised treatment approach ensures the best outcome for the patient.

“We acknowledge the PSA test is not perfect. Mammography and pap smears are not perfect either, however, this does not stop them being used as they are the best tests currently available to detect early disease,” said Dr Malouf.

Dr Malouf said that with each passing year the scale and validity of international prostate screening studies is growing. The current data from a major Swedish study shows a 44% reduction in prostate cancer deaths in men who underwent PSA testing. If applied to the Australian and New Zealand population this could mean 1200-1400 men each year avoid a prostate cancer death.”

“Treatment of any cancer can be associated with side effects. In the case of prostate cancer there is strong evidence that these can be reduced by early detection when the cancer is smaller and require less extensive surgery or radiation treatments such as brachytherapy which treat the prostate without affecting the adjacent normal structures.

“We know that treating advanced disease can have adverse side effects, which is one of the reasons the Urological Society encourages men aged 40 and over to discuss a prostate cancer test with their GP. The key to minimising side effects is early detection”, he said.

“We acknowledge that there has been evidence of over-treatment for prostate cancer overseas, but this is not the case in Australia where there is no data to suggest we are treating clinically insignificant diseases. The Urological Society has put in place strategies to ensure that men are getting the right treatment at the right time, which in some cases means no treatment at all and an active surveillance protocol,” said Dr Malouf.

“It would be a tragedy if even one man who could have been saved by an early PSA blood test reads this book and decides simply to bury his head in the sand and take his chances.”

**Media enquiries:**

Edwina Gatenby

Maxicom Public Relations

Phone: 61 2 99659300

Mobile: 0402 130 254 (61 402 130 254 if calling from NZ)

Dr David Malouf is available for interview.