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Integrated Marketing/PR

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE
September 7, 2010

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Region's Prostate Cancer Testing Numbers Show Many at Potential Risk
HARC Data Also Reveals Large Gaps Between Whites, Latinos

(PALM DESERT, CA) – When to get a prostate cancer test has become a source of confusion among many men following the newly revised prostate cancer screening guidelines released earlier this year by the American Cancer Society. In the midst of that uncertainty, a large number of men are not being tested at all, based on data collected by the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC).

HARC's landmark 2007 study, a comprehensive look at health conditions across Eastern Riverside County, shows that more than 47,000 men aged 40 years and older have never received a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test. That represents an estimated 28.2% of the overall population. Men between the ages of 40 and 44 are the least likely to undergo testing.

Of note, HARC found that ethnicity can serve as a leading indicator for prostate testing. Nearly 71% of Hispanic/Latino males reported never undergoing a PSA test, contrasted with only 17.6% of the Caucasian male population. In looking at the effects of household income, males in households making less than \$25,000 annually were the least likely to get testing compared to their counterparts at higher income levels. When you consider that 203,415 men nationwide were diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2006, according to United States Cancer Statistics' most recent data, the risk of not getting a PSA is substantial. However, not all members of the medical community are in agreement about how and when screening should occur.



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For example, in March 2010, the American Cancer Society released new guidelines recommending that men should discuss the uncertainties, risks and potential benefits of prostate screening before deciding on testing, as the overall value of early detection in reducing morbidity and mortality from prostate cancer remains unclear. The debate over that issue may surface again this September, during national Prostate Awareness Month.

Glen Grayman MD, President of the HARC Board of Directors, encourages residents to take the time to learn about the issues involved in prostate screening and talk to their doctors.

“Ultimately, these are very personal decisions that are best made when the patient fully understands the risks and benefits of testing and the consequences that take place when a particular path is chosen,” said Dr. Grayman.

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 30 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501(c)3 organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities that contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.harcddata.org.