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## New blood test may detect aggressive prostate cancer

A new blood test has been found to accurately detect the presence of aggressive prostate cancer, according to research by Queen Mary University of London.

By combining the current prostate specific antigen (PSA) test with the new test (the circulating tumour cell (CTC) test, this could help men avoid unnecessary and invasive biopsies, over-diagnosis and over-treatment.

Prostate cancer is currently detected using a [blood test](#) that measures PSA levels. Although it provides early diagnosis, 75% of all PSA positive results ending up with negative biopsies that do not find cancer.

The study, published in the [Journal of Urology](#), looked at the use of the CTC test in almost 100 pre-biopsy patients and over 150 newly diagnosed prostate cancer patients at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London.

The research team found that the presence of CTCs in pre-biopsy blood samples was indicative of the presence of aggressive prostate cancer, and efficiently and non-invasively predicted the later outcome of biopsy results.

When the CTC tests were used in combination with the current PSA test, it was able to predict the presence of aggressive prostate cancer in other biopsies with over 90% accuracy.

The test could also show how aggressive the cancer is. Focusing on more aggressive prostate cancer may reduce overtreatment and unnecessary biopsies for benign and non-aggressive conditions.

Lead researcher Professor Yong-Jie Lu from Queen Mary University of London said: "The current prostate cancer test often leads to unnecessary invasive biopsies and over-diagnosis and over-treatment of many men, causing significant harm to patients and a waste of valuable healthcare resources. There is clearly a need for a better selection process for patients to undergo the biopsy procedure.

"Testing for circulating tumour cells is efficient, non-invasive and potentially accurate, and we've now demonstrated its potential to improve the current standard of care. By combining the new CTC analysis with the current PSA test, we were able to detect prostate cancer with the highest level of accuracy ever seen in any biomarker test, which could spare many patients unnecessary biopsies. This could lead to a paradigm shift in the way we diagnose prostate cancer," he added.

Due to the small sample size, the findings will need to be validated by further studies. However, researchers said the CTC test could be available on the NHS in as little as three years if successful.

Sara Hiom, Cancer Research UK's director of early diagnosis, said: "It's early days, so the next steps would be to study a larger number of people."

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