



News Release

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ERMC notifies beneficiaries affected by prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening error

SEMBACH, Germany – Europe Regional Medical Command is notifying beneficiaries who received an incorrect prostate cancer screening blood test between August 2009 and May of 2012 at military medical treatment facilities in Germany, Italy, Belgium Kosovo and U.S. Central Command that are supported by the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center laboratory.

Approximately 3,280 patients have been identified and should receive a letter in the next 7-10 days informing them of the error.

“We are working diligently to notify every person who did not receive the correct screening test,” said COL John P. Collins, commander of Europe Regional Medical Command. “Our patients are our number one priority and we sincerely apologize for any stress this error may create for them.”

Europe Regional Medical Command has since conducted a comprehensive review of all prostate screening test procedures to ensure that the problem has been corrected and implemented new guidelines to prevent future errors from occurring.

The problem occurred when healthcare providers ordered an incorrect prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test intended to help detect prostate cancer. The incorrect test was ordered due to how the PSA tests appeared in the Composite Health Care System (CHCS) medical database. Patients should have first been screened with the “Total PSA” test used to detect elevated levels of PSA, a protein produced by prostate gland cells. Instead, their providers ordered the “Free PSA” test which is sometimes used as a follow-on test depending upon the results of the Total PSA test results.

When doctors ordered a PSA test for a patient through CHCS, the Free PSA appeared as the first option and Total PSA was option two. Some healthcare providers inadvertently selected the first option (Free PSA) believing it to be the comprehensive test they wanted.

The issue was detected in February of 2012 by medical staff at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany, where PSA screening tests are analyzed in the medical center laboratory for military medical treatment facilities supported by Europe Regional Medical Command. The problem was corrected in the CHCS medical database within a month, but the scope of beneficiaries affected by the error was not recognized until May 2013 after an analysis of CHCS data for all tests was conducted. This analysis was prompted by a patient who notified Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Patient Advocacy that his medical provider informed him that he had been given the wrong PSA screening test.

“After a thorough review of our laboratory ordering procedures, we can confidently say no similar problems were found,” said Collins. “Our main priority is the health and well being of our patients and we will continue working to notify those affected and offer any assistance we can. The computer database has been corrected and our providers have been made aware of how the discrepancy in the system led to the widespread error so they can be vigilant in avoiding similar issues in the future.”

Beneficiaries affected by this issue who are still living in Europe are asked to please discuss any concerns or questions with their Primary Care Provider. U.S. Army Medical Command has also notified Defense Department healthcare agencies to provide support for beneficiaries not living in Europe.

Beneficiaries can also call the Europe Regional Medical Command PSA Advice Line at: DSN 314-590-8889; within Germany 06371-9464-8889; from the United States 011-49-6371-9464-8889. Callers will reach an automated voice mailbox which will collect their contact information and record their questions. Callers should receive a response within two business days. Beneficiaries can also call the 24/7 stateside PSA Advice Line (Wounded Soldier Family Hotline) at DSN (312) 421-3700 or toll free at (800) 984-8523. Beneficiaries may reach Army health officials by email at usarmy.landstuhl.medcom-ermc.list.psa-advice@mail.mil or via a link on the U.S. Army Medicine Website at: www.armymedicine.army.mil.