Many Older People Disagree With Life Expectancy–Based Cancer Screening

The majority of people aged 50 to 80 years disagreed with the idea that life expectancy should guide whether a person is screened for cancer, according to results from 2563 older adults surveyed in a recent National Poll on Healthy Aging. Moreover, 70% of respondents reported thinking it was acceptable for older adults to continue being screened for cancer even if US guidelines stated they should not.

Current guidelines, many of which recommend stopping screening at 75 years, are based in part on research suggesting that it takes 10 years for a person to benefit from being screened for cancer. For older adults who are expected to live at least an additional 10 years, the benefits of cancer screening might outweigh the risks, which include complications for certain screening procedures such as bleeding or adverse effects from anesthesia.

"Personalizing cancer screening decisions to each patient’s health situation, rather than using one-size-fits-all age cutoffs, could benefit both very healthy and less healthy patients in different ways,” Brian Zikmund-Fisher, PhD, who was involved in the poll, said in a statement. – Emily Harris

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Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.