

Free prostate exams to be available later this month

A quick 10-minute exam and blood test can be the difference between life and death for some men. A urology center in Birmingham is making it a mission to provide free prostate screenings to men in the Dallas County area.

The Dallas County Health Department is partnering with Dr. Thomas Moody of the Urology Health Foundation to offer the services on June 20 at the Dallas County Health Department at 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Moody, who's also a medical professional at Urology Centers of Alabama, knows the seriousness of prostate cancer and how screenings affect men in the state.

"The percentage of men getting screened in Alabama has been low," he said. "Our death rate from prostate cancer is the third highest in the nation, and we believe it is related to the numbers of men who are not getting screened."

The exam that will be given at the free screening is not as bad as what some make it out to be, he said.

"It's not painful," Moody said. "It's a digital rectal exam and a blood test that takes no more than 10 minutes. We say it's 10 minutes that can save your life. In some counties we get people who come back every year because they realize this [exam] is no big deal."

Convincing men to get checked can be a bit of a task, especially since early prostate cancer can carry no symptoms, he said. Moody said a lot of men believe and think they feel fine, but it is still important to get screened.

He recommends men get screened every year starting at age 40.

With help from Selma Police Chief William Riley and pastor John E. Grayson of Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, Moody can help expound the importance of early screenings in the county.

Riley said he will put up posters around the police department to help increase awareness about the screening. He's also reaching out to those who work right beside him. Prostate cancer has claimed the life of one of his family members.

"It's truly personal for me," he said. "One of my grandfathers died from prostate cancer, and my uncle has had it."

Grayson recognizes the severity of the health of men around him. He gathered some of his church members and attended a screening in Wilcox County.

"I saw an opportunity to help save lives," Grayson said. "We [men] don't go to the doctor real easy. Sometimes we neglect our health, and we put it off until later."

If a participant's screening results reveal potential issues, follow-up procedures will be recommended. Dr. Moody and his association will provide procedures and medical care for free or at little to no cost, regardless of medical insurance.