

ZERO Prostate Cancer Initiative Commits to Improving Cancer Outcomes [WATCH]

Blitz the Barriers aims to close gaps in prostate cancer survival in high-risk communities such as Black men and veterans.

February 25, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

A new initiative by ZERO Prostate Cancer, a leading advocacy group, addresses disparities in [prostate cancer](#) outcomes among vulnerable communities, including Black men, [veterans](#) and residents of [rural](#) areas, according to a [ZERO news release](#).

The [Blitz the Barriers initiative](#) aims to work with supporters across the country to raise \$20 million over the next 10 years in support of prostate cancer education, outreach and more to increase [health equity](#) in high-risk communities.

"The challenges posed by prostate cancer are too significant to ignore, especially in communities where mistrust, [stigma](#) or limited resources have hindered access to lifesaving education and care," said ZERO president and CEO Courtney Bugler, in the release.

About one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime, and nearly 313,780 people will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2025, according to [the American Cancer Society](#). Despite advances in early detection and treatment, prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in U.S. men.

Prostate cancer is a typically slow-growing cancer of the prostate gland, a walnut-sized organ located under the bladder and in front of the rectum. But in some cases, the cancer can grow rapidly and spread beyond the prostate, a process known as metastasis.

Black men are about 75% more likely to develop aggressive, metastatic prostate cancer and twice as likely to die of it, and veterans are twice as likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer,

according to the release.

To improve prostate cancer outcomes among these groups, the initiative aims to boost [access to care](#), education and [screening](#), improve medical trust and offer patient support and advocacy. What's more, the initiative will develop personalized patient navigation services, establish an online support community, launch group meetings and more.

With a \$7.5 million commitment from leading founding partner [Novartis](#), an innovative medicines company, Blitz the Barriers will launch pilot programs in Atlanta and Baltimore, which have significant disparities in prostate cancer health outcomes. ZERO aims to expand the initiative to other high-risk cities, including Washington, DC, New Orleans, Detroit, Houston and more.

By 2030, the initiative seeks to increase screening in pilot community populations by 20%, with a goal of saving more than 30,000 lives. By 2035, it aims to save more than 100,000 lives.

"Access to reliable experts, information and a strong support network can transform an individual's cancer journey, breaking down barriers to early detection, treatment and survival," Bugler said. "That's what Blitz the Barriers aims to provide. Together with Novartis and other lead partners, we're ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or ZIP code, receives the care and support they deserve."

To learn more, click [#Prostate Cancer](#) or read [Basics on Prostate Cancer](#). It reads in part:

What are the risk factors for prostate cancer?

The major risk factors for prostate cancer are genetics and family history. Studies looking at the link between prostate cancer and a diet high in red meat, chemical exposures, including smoking, sexually transmitted infections and having had a vasectomy have produced conflicting results.

What is prostate cancer screening?

Doctors primarily use two tests to screen for prostate cancer: the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test and the digital rectal exam, in which a finger is inserted into the rectum to feel for lumps or swelling of the prostate.

[Experts disagree about when prostate cancer screening should be done](#). Because it usually grows slowly, most men with prostate cancer will die of other causes and early treatment

carries some risks. The American Cancer Society recommends that at age 50, men should discuss the risks and benefits of screening with their doctor and make an individual decision. African American men and those with a family history of prostate cancer should start this discussion sooner, at 45 or even 40.

What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?

Usually early-stage prostate cancer, when tumors are small, causes few or no symptoms. As cancer progresses, some men may experience symptoms including:

- A frequent urge to urinate
- Difficulty urinating
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Difficulty getting an erection
- Pain in the lower back and hips.

Some of these symptoms may also be caused by noncancerous enlargement of the prostate, known as benign prostatic hyperplasia. Men with metastatic prostate cancer may experience other symptoms, such as bone pain, as the cancer spreads.