



Opening Statement of Chairman Edolphus Towns

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

March 4, 2010

“Prostate Cancer: New Questions About Screening and Treatment”

Good morning and thank you all for being here.

Prostate cancer is the second most common type of cancer found in American men, the first being skin cancer. It is also among the leading cause of cancer death in men, second only to lung cancer. One man in six will get prostate cancer in his lifetime. And one man in 35 will die from it.

The good news is that the death rate for prostate cancer is declining. The bad news is that we still don't know what causes it. We still don't know why African-American men are more likely to get it. And we still don't know why it seems to be most prevalent in North America and Europe.

But most importantly for today, there is still controversy over whether men should be screened for prostate cancer and there are still questions about how it should be treated. We are hoping to shed some light on these questions today.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the important role my colleague, Rep. Elijah Cummings, has had in requesting these hearings and helping to ensure that these issues get the attention they deserve.

I also want to welcome to our hearing today Mr. Lou Gossett. Mr. Gossett is very well known for his work in the film industry, and has been widely recognized as one of the great actors of our time. What is not well known, is that he has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Mr. Gossett has agreed to testify today to help bring attention to the issue.

We also have Mrs. Betty Gallo, widow of our former colleague, Congressman Dean Gallo, who died from prostate cancer. And we have with us also, Mr. Thomas Farrington, a ten-year prostate cancer survivor who will tell us about his experience.

There is a high degree of public awareness of the need for regular screening for certain kinds of cancers, notably breast cancer, prostate cancer, and colon cancer.

However, this widespread belief is now being debated. A few months ago, the New York Times reported that some scientists had concluded that the benefits of detecting many cancers, especially breast and prostate, have been overstated, and that regular screening might do as much harm as good.

This has caused widespread confusion, which we hope to help clear up today. To help us do that, we have assembled some of the leading medical experts in the country to discuss the latest thinking on screening and treatment for prostate cancer.

I look forward to their testimony on this very important issue.

Thank you.