Tall Men Are At Higher Risk for Aggressive Prostate Cancer

The association is especially strong among men younger than 65 years, according to researchers.

Are you tall? Have you been complimented on a number of times because of your height? Do you indulge in the attention that you get from it? Do you enjoy “looking down” on short men? Maybe you should think twice. Did you know that a recent study published in the British Journal of Cancer has found out that tall men are at a higher risk of having aggressive prostate cancer than those who are shorter than them? This is especially true if these men are younger than 65.

Tall men are more likely to be diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer than short men, especially if they are younger than 65, according to a study published recently in the British Journal of Cancer. The finding emerged from a study of 34,268 men, of whom 2,144, or 43%, were diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer, a malignancy that is more likely to spread and cause death. For the study population as a whole, tallness was not associated with an increased risk of any type of prostate cancer or the risk of non-aggressive disease. However, men who were at least six-foot-three had a 39% increased risk for aggressive prostate cancer compared with men who were no taller than five-foot-seven. Much of this increased risk was limited to men younger than 65. In this age group, the taller men had a 76% increased risk of aggressive cancer compared with the shorter men.

In addition, the risk increased with height. Each 5-cm increment in height was associated with a 5% increased risk of aggressive cancer.

The study was led by Jiyoung Ahn, PhD, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at the New York University School of Medicine.

Luisa Zuccolo, of the University of Bristol in the U.K., who led a previous study that found an association between increased height and high-grade prostate cancer, said the new study provides independent confirmation of her team’s results, but it does not shed light on the reasons for the association.

“We need more studies to explore the underlying mechanisms that could explain this link,” Zuccolo commented. “We do not believe that height itself matters in determining the risk of prostate cancer, or aggressive prostate cancer in particular, but we speculate that factors that influence height may also influence cancer, and height is therefore acting as a marker for these underlying causal factors.” Dr. Ahn’s team plans to evaluate whether genetic factors associated with height are also linked to the development of aggressive prostate cancer.
So it is unpractical to screen or treat based on the height, because it only plays a small role in prostate cancer risk as compared to age, race and family history. Even so, these findings have opened up a whole new set of scientific inquiries to learn more about the causes of prostate cancer.