Changing Concepts in Early Cancer Detection

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The database of early detection of prostate cancer is, unfortunately, inhomogeneous, thus providing a battleground for diverse interpretations that are not driven only by intellectual scrutiny but by professional attitudes and individual interests. With the editors' plan to sharpen the picture by presenting a Pro and Contra tableau, it was easy enough to find experts ready to argue in favour of early detection. More than just a few raised their eyebrows when the respective opponents and commentators were named, and the ensuing debate was not entirely free from personal controversy. Hoping, however, to spark a wider factual discussion amongst the readers, we like to thank all contributors for their readiness to deal with this complex matter.

The beneficiaries of more and more differentiated information will be concerned individuals, the public, and last but not

least the legislation. We are still miles away from being able to give expert advice on all open questions surrounding the law on early cancer detection (Krebsfrüherkennungs- und -registergesetz, KFRG). These include: definition of the target population; appropriate procedures; intervals of testing; risk-adapted early diagnosis; and adequate obligatory information. This much is certain, opportunistic screening that lacks evaluation must end. Public relations events and campaigns may succeed in raising demand but fail to enable truly informed consent. We require fora in order to arrive at a public consent that will inform and capacitate our political decision makers.

What does the reader think about the changing concept of early cancer detection? Looking forward to a lively discussion, Karger Verlag is ready to publish reactions in the form of 'Letters to the Editor'.