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Value of Annual Pelvic/Gynecological and Physical Exams

In the past year, there have been numerous articles in the news debating the necessities of various screening exams. Should women have annual mammograms and pelvic exams/PAP tests? Should men have annual PSA levels checked? There is no decisive evidence that shows these exams save "a significant number of lives" and governments are looking at how much these tests costs, which runs into billions per year. I question how research can quantify prevention, quality of health or the empowerment individuals can gain to make informed lifestyle choices. Who determines The number of lives saved that warrants regular screening exam?

For the past 23 years, I've been performing, physicals, lab work, annual pelvic and breast exams for my patients. PAP tests are usually done every other year for most women, though recommendations on that are changing too. I remind woman that having a yearly pelvic exam is important to check for any changes of the ovaries, uterus or pelvic floor. The necessity of annual mammograms frequency for women is based on her history, self-body awareness and preferences.

These are typically 45 to 60 minute visits, though the actual exam rarely takes more than 10 to 15 minutes. We review diet, supplements, medications, fitness, emotional health and stress management.

Health is so much more than the absence of disease or pathology. I believe good health is feeling vital, energetic and able to live a fulfilling life. This does require a strong physical body, and fortunately, my patients realize this too.

I say, yes, "it is worth it" for "healthy" people to have an annual visit. An ounce of prevention is still much better than a pound of cure, but the pharmaceutical and insurance industries may have a different opinion.