



SCREENING – Made Simple!

Example Question: Outline whether screening for Prostate Cancer is justified.

Having trouble remembering Wilson's & Junger's Criteria (1969)? Be troubled no more:

Mnemonic C-NET
 TFT (as in Thyroid Function Tests)
 PIC (as in picture)

Common disease	The disease itself should be common enough to warrant screening....no point screening for something extremely rare if it is not cost effective.
Natural history of disease known	
Early window for intervention	No point in picking up something when it is too late!
Test available, sensitive & specific	(refers to the test used in screening)

Test – cheap, acceptable and simple test (CAST)	(refers to the test used in screening)
Facilities available for diagnosis and treatment	No point doing screening if no-one knows where it is to be done or where to send the patient for treatment should that be necessary.
Treatment is effective	Goes without saying!

Psychological/Physical Harm is low	This refers to the psychological and/or physical harm as a result of the screening test. Don't forget...a lot of current screening tests do cause unnecessary anxiety (especially if they have a high false positive rate!)
Interval for repeat screening agreed	
Cost Effective	Speaks for itself.

Other Notes

Screening questions are common in the MRCGP examination. Start answering these type of questions with a starting statement; something like:

'Applying Wilson's & Junger's Criteria (1969) for a good screening test will help determine whether screening for disease x is justified. The following is a list of the criteria:

CRITERION	DOES SCREENING FOR PROSTATE CARCINOMA SATISFY IT?
1. Common disease on autopsy)	Yes. Prostate Carcinoma is common. (Many have prostate Ca on autopsy)
2. Natural History Known	For prostate Carcinoma - No
3. There is an early window for intervention.	NO

Get the idea? Make it easy for yourself. It is also easy for the examiner to mark and (s)he'll think the sun shines from