

Martin Steinberg



Early in 2018, the actor and TV presenter Stephen Fry underwent surgery for prostate cancer after it was detected during a routine visit to his doctor for a winter flu injection. A subsequent health check revealed that he had high prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels. When prostate cancer is diagnosed, it's given a Gleason score to rate the aggressiveness of the condition, with treatment then offered accordingly.

EIT Innovators Award winner Martin Steinberg believes that this testing procedure is failing men around the world, however, both in not diagnosing prostate cancer accurately enough, and also forcing many to undergo extremely uncomfortable and potentially dangerous biopsies.

A hidden problem

It's estimated that 1.1 million men were diagnosed with prostate cancer around the world in 2012. As with so many medical conditions, the earlier it's detected, the more successful the treatment tends to be. The problem is two-fold. Firstly, awareness of prostate cancer remains very low, despite it being the most common form of cancer for men, especially in the ageing western world. This lack of awareness prevents many men from gaining a diagnosis early enough to make treatment effective.

The second challenge is that everyone with a high PSA reading is referred for a prostate biopsy, which involves multiple punctures with a biopsy needle to collect an adequate sample of the prostate for testing. The procedure is painful and not something that professionals wish to impose upon patients unnecessarily.



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Steinberg believes that some 350 000 unnecessary procedures are conducted across Europe each year, and it's a problem he is helping tackle via the Stockholm3 Test, a new and non-invasive test that he believes can dramatically increase the accuracy of prostate testing.

'Four men out of five who go to the urologist shouldn't have been there,' Steinberg says. 'Either they have the benign form of prostate cancer, or they have no prostate cancer at all.'

-  **Website:** sthlm3.se
-  **Country:** Sweden
-  **Innovation Community:** EIT Health

Smarter testing

The Stockholm3 test significantly improves diagnostics of prostate cancer. It was proven in a study with nearly 60,000 men who had not been diagnosed with prostate cancer and it was published in [The Lancet Oncology](#). In later clinical studies, the Stockholm3 test has been shown to identify twice as many aggressive prostate cancers while reducing the risk for biopsy by half, compared to current clinical practice with PSA.

The test, which is now undertaken in Sweden, Norway and Finland, has allowed the company to successfully license the process across the Nordic Countries, and now plans are underway to broaden out testing to cover countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK.



Getting to market

Getting new medical products to market requires intense collaboration across government, academia and industry. The EIT Community has been fundamental in securing that collaboration, both as a facilitator and introducer, and also in providing credibility when talking with various stakeholders.

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'For us, it's been tremendously important to get the support of EIT Health. We've been able to validate the Stockholm3 test much faster in several markets,' Steinberg says. 'EIT Health's support has also been crucial in the sense that we can say this is something supported by the European Union.'

Membership of the EIT Community has also enabled the company to tap into the academic, corporate and government networks that they so vitally need to test, validate and scale up the proposition in territories throughout Europe.

'We found potential sites to validate extremely quickly,' Steinberg continues. 'It was literally just me and the phone and some help from the EIT Community to get these people, and we got it done in less than a week, despite not having any contacts because there was trust already there with the partners.'

The ability to tap into these partnerships has been the biggest single lesson that Steinberg has taken from his entrepreneurial journey to date. Whether it's partnering with an industry giant like Thermo Fisher or regional authorities such as Stockholm County Council to undertake the clinical study, it's very difficult to do everything on your own when you're a small start-up.

With populations across Europe ageing, it is vital that countries across the EU get to grips with the often hidden spectre of prostate cancer. Tests like Stockholm3 hold tremendous promise in supporting that process, and it will be fascinating to monitor their progress in the coming years.