

COLORECTAL CANCER EARLY DETECTION

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related death in the nation. In 2004, about 56,730 Americans will die from colorectal cancer and about 146,940 new cases will be diagnosed.
- Survival is greatly enhanced when this cancer is detected and treated early; yet only 38% of colorectal cancer cases are diagnosed at an early, localized stage.
- Screening for colorectal cancer can help prevent the disease by identifying precancerous polyps that can be removed before cancer develops. Unfortunately, these effective screening tests are underused.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

With funds from CDC's Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion appropriations, CDC supports and promotes national colorectal cancer screening by educating healthcare providers and the public about the benefits of screening, the availability of screening procedures, and screening guidelines. CDC educates Americans aged 50 years or older about the importance of regular colorectal cancer screening with its national colorectal cancer action campaign, *Screen for Life*. CDC has developed an online training program, *A Call To Action* (www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorctl/calltoaction/index.htm) to further raise primary care providers' awareness and knowledge about the prevention and early detection of colorectal cancer. CDC supports epidemiological, behavioral science, and surveillance research efforts to gather and analyze data. CDC also funds prevention and intervention research projects and investigations related to colorectal cancer. In addition, CDC works with various national partners like the American Cancer Society to support efforts that inform and educate multiple audiences about the importance of colorectal cancer screening. CDC focuses its policies, programs, and efforts toward reaching the goal of increasing screening rates and reducing colorectal cancer deaths.

Example of Program in Action

Recent evidence indicates that screening reduces death rates from colorectal cancer. With support from CDC, through its comprehensive cancer control program, states and tribes are encouraged to create cancer control plans which integrate cancer prevention and control activities, especially those related to colorectal cancer. The overall objectives of these plans are to use resources as efficiently as possible, improve community-based education and health promotion, share expertise, and effectively target at-risk populations. For instance, a colorectal cancer control initiative may include these activities: develop broad-based coalitions, increase awareness about the need for and importance of screening, conduct colorectal cancer screening in local health departments across the state, and train healthcare professionals to perform flexible sigmoidoscopy (the screening test for colorectal cancer). Additional funding is provided to Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, Utah, Washington, and West Virginia to implement specific colorectal cancer strategies within their statewide comprehensive cancer control plans.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will promote colorectal cancer screening campaigns nationwide by educating healthcare providers and the public about current screening guidelines and the benefits of screening. CDC will support prevention and intervention research to find ways to improve colorectal cancer screening rates and answer questions related to clinical infrastructure, methods, frequency, and best practices for screening. CDC will enhance colorectal cancer reporting for racial and ethnic minorities and use registries to assess the quality of care received by people diagnosed with this disease. CDC will continue to work with its national partners to raise colorectal cancer awareness.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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