

CHEROKEE NATION

Holiday Health Fair Draws a Crowd

Despite the rain, onlookers crowded under the tent to tour the Super Colon, a huge replica of the human colon that shows different stages of cancer and other diseases. As they walked through the Super Colon, visitors learned how they could help to prevent colon cancer and detect when something may be wrong.

“We could tell when the Cherokee National Holiday parade was over because we had a steady stream of folks waiting to take a tour of Super Colon,” said Ruth Hummingbird, Project Coordinator for the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program in Oklahoma.

Although only 94 visitors registered, about 235 people toured the Super Colon. To help visitors remember important facts about colon cancer, they took pre- and post-tests. The post-tests were placed in a box to be drawn for door prizes.

Traditionally, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, boasts a high Native American population, but those numbers swell when members of other tribes are in town for the Cherokee National Holiday. When staff from the Prevent Cancer Foundation offered to send the Super Colon on a tour of the Cherokee Nation, it was featured at the Cherokee National Holiday Health Fair to maximize outreach to Native Americans. The incidence of colon cancer and the number of patients who are diagnosed at later stages is high in the Cherokee Nation.

Data from the Oklahoma State Cancer Registry, CINA + Online, and the Cherokee Nation Cancer Registry reveal that Native Americans living in the Cherokee Nation have higher colorectal cancer death rates than Native Americans living in Oklahoma and across the United States, at 26.5, 21.6, and 20.0 per 100,000 people, respectively.

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In fact, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in the Cherokee Nation, which may be due to the low screening rate in the tribal jurisdictional service area. Cherokee Nation Cancer Registry data also show that many patients are diagnosed after the age of 59. Of these cases, only about 4% are diagnosed at the earliest stage, up from 1% in 2003. Of the remaining cases, 28% are diagnosed at the local stage, 35% at the regional stage, and 33% have not been staged.

“The Prevent Cancer Foundation sincerely appreciated the opportunity to partner with the Cherokee Nation Comprehensive Cancer Control Program to educate and empower the Cherokee Nation citizens in combating colorectal cancer,” said Jessica Albeita of the Prevent Cancer Foundation.

Many people touring the Super Colon said they were not aware that fiber intake, physical activity, and water play a big role in colon cancer prevention. Several visitors said they would change their habits to begin taking care of their colon.

Contact

Ruth Hummingbird

Cherokee Nation Comprehensive Cancer Control Program

📞 918-453-5759

✉️ Ruth-hummingbird@cherokee.org

🌐 <http://cancer.cherokee.org>