

Colon Cancer Screening Saves Lives, But Many People Don't Get Tested

(NAPSA)—One in three people 50 years old or older has not been screened for colon cancer, yet screening could help save their lives. This statistic is just one of the troubling findings of a national study by the Colon Cancer Alliance, the leading national patient advocacy organization dedicated to increasing colon cancer screening rates and survivorship, and Quest Diagnostics, the world's leading diagnostic testing company. The two organizations recently teamed up to uncover the barriers that prevent people from being tested for colon cancer (also known as colorectal cancer), the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in men and women in the U.S.

Screening by colonoscopy, fecal immunochemical tests and other methods helps identify colon cancer in early stages when it is still highly treatable. For this reason, the American Cancer Society recommends screening for every man and woman of average risk, beginning at age 50. African Americans, smokers and anyone who has a family history or other risk factors should be tested even earlier. Yet the Colon Cancer Alliance/Quest Diagnostics study found that many people 50 and over are not being screened. Moreover, the barriers to screening ranged from the lack of recommendation for screening by a healthcare professional to time and cost constraints. The study also suggested that fear of the bowel preparation, side effects and anesthesia typically associated with colonoscopy are additional barriers.

"Screening tests like a colonoscopy do a superb job of catching colon cancer in early, treatable stages," said Jon R. Cohen, M.D., senior vice president and chief medical officer, Quest Diagnostics. "Unfortunately, some people refuse to undergo these proven tests because they find them inconvenient and unpleasant. Other individuals simply do not understand



Over 50? Talk to your doctor about getting tested for colon cancer.

the value of screening, in some cases because a healthcare professional has not talked to them about it."

The study also found that 80 percent of respondents said they'd be more likely to be screened if a convenient blood test were available. Blood tests that detect the DNA of colon cancer tumors shed into the bloodstream are available in the U.S. and Europe, but have yet to be adopted into medical guidelines for screening. Quest Diagnostics offers its ColoVantage blood test to help physicians evaluate colon cancer risk in patients who refuse to undergo colonoscopy or other guideline-recommended tests. A positive test result requires further evaluation that may include colonoscopy.

"Any death from colon cancer due to a failure to screen is a tragedy that could have been prevented," said Andrew Spiegel, chief executive officer of the Colon Cancer Alliance. "I encourage patients to talk to their healthcare providers about the importance of colon cancer screening, their risk factors for colon cancer, and the different screening tests available. With increased screening rates, deaths from colon cancer may one day be a thing of the past."

To learn more, visit www.ccalliance.org or www.QuestDiagnostics.com/ColoVantage.