

2018 Community Outreach for the Prevention and Screening of Colon Cancer

The second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States is colorectal cancer (CRC).¹ It is anticipated that 140,250 people will be diagnosed with, and 50,630 people will die from, CRC in 2018.¹ CRC has a 90% 5-year survival rate when it is diagnosed early. Unfortunately, only 40% of people have CRC identified at an early, treatable stage.

In Illinois, CRC claims more victims than in other parts of the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the state has higher rates of CRC than its neighbors Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana. About 2,400 of 6,600 Illinoisans diagnosed annually with colorectal cancer, will die from it, mainly because the cancer was discovered too late. Illinois is in the highest quartile for incidence rates of colorectal cancer in the nation, and the lowest quartile for screening rates. Further Although Cook County has a similar colorectal cancer incidence rate as the state of Illinois, its mortality rate is significantly higher than the state of Illinois overall rate and ranks 3rd across the 104 counties in Illinois.

In 2016, the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable (NCCRT) launched an initiative with the American Cancer Society to achieve an 80% screening goal by 2018. Unfortunately Illinois missed this goal by 16.5% having achieved only a 63.5% screening rate.

When our doctor prescribes it, most of us choose colonoscopy, the gold standard for colorectal cancer screening and prevention every 10 years. So why do so many people fail to get their colon cancer screening done? Perhaps it is the preparation to get the exam, or the thought of having the colonoscopy tube as part of the exam process. But colorectal cancer is on the increase especially in younger people. Therefore in 2018, the American Cancer Society made the following recommendations:

The recommendation to begin colorectal cancer screening at age 45 years (a qualified Recommendation)²

The recommendation for regular colorectal cancer screening in adults age 50 years or older (strong recommendation)²

If you're 45 or older, getting screened for colorectal cancer should be high on your list of priorities. Why? Because it saves lives. Colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable cancers of all, but its most common early symptom is usually no symptom at all. That's why screening is so important.

Here's the good news. In an effort to increase screening rates, UChicago Medicine Ingalls Memorial launched a procedure this year called CT colonography "virtual colonoscopy" which is a safe, effective, and minimally invasive option for colorectal cancer screening. "During a virtual colonoscopy, a CT scan of the abdomen creates 3-D images able to show polyps and other abnormalities inside the wall of the colon and rectum that can grow larger and develop into cancer if untreated," explained Syam Reddy, M.D., diagnostic radiologist with a body-imaging subspecialty on staff at Ingalls. For the less than 10 percent of people whose virtual

exam results in finding a polyp, a traditional colonoscopy will need to be performed to have it removed or biopsied.

A social media campaign that was part of the launch in mid-August 2018 for this new program included about 500 viewings on facebook with 27 CT colonography screenings being completed as a result. For those patients with abnormalities, assistance has been provided for follow up testing and surveillance as appropriate.

"The newer procedure is less invasive since the tube inserted into the rectum is shorter than the one used for a colonoscopy, there are fewer complications, and the accuracy is comparable to colonoscopy for patients at average risk," said Dr. Reddy. "Those with higher risk, such as African Americans or those with a family history of colon cancer, may need to be screened earlier." The program includes assistance to facilitate same day treatment with a gastroenterologist, which would preclude the need for a second prep needing to be done.

1. Siegel, R., Miller, K., Jemal, A. Cancer Statistics 2018. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. Volume 68, issue 1. 4 Jan 18. <https://doi.org/10.3322/caac.21442>
2. American Cancer Society colorectal cancer screening guideline. <https://www.cancer.org/research/infographics-gallery/colorectal-cancer-screening-guideline-for-men-and-women-at-average-risk.html>