

New Study Shows Colorectal Cancer Can Be Prevented With Regular Screening



(NAPS)—Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death after lung cancer in the United States, accounting for more than 56,000 deaths annually. The disease affects both men and women, and more than 130,000 Americans are diagnosed each year.

The disease is 90 percent curable when colorectal cancer is detected in its early stages. However, only 37 percent of all cases are detected in their early manageable stages. A new study, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, reveals that regular screening with a fecal occult blood test can reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer by at least 20 percent. “These important findings are significant, in that they show that this deadly cancer is now preventable with regular screening,” according to the lead study investigator, Jack Mandel, Ph.D., M.P.H., epidemiologist and Group Vice President at Exponent, Inc.

In this twenty-five year study, over 46,000 patients used the Hemocult® fecal occult blood test, manufactured by Beckman Coulter, Inc. This test is used to exam-

ine stool samples for hidden blood. Hemocult can help detect benign polyps and cancers that can be removed during a colonoscopic examination. When cancerous polyps are detected and removed, the disease can be prevented. These findings also support earlier conclusions from the same trial that regular screening can decrease mortality rates for this cancer by at least 33 percent.

Colorectal cancer is often a silent disease, with patients experiencing no symptoms at all. The American Cancer Society guidelines recommend that all people age 50 and older, as well as younger people who are considered at risk for the disease, should be screened using the available methods including an annual fecal occult blood test. At present, only 20 percent of all at-risk people receive any form of colorectal cancer screening.

Potential risk factors for developing the disease include a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, a diet high in fat, obesity, and physical inactivity. Excessive alcohol consumption and smoking can also increase risk. Symptoms may

include blood in bowel movements, altered bowel habits and abdominal pain. However, since patients often don’t experience any symptoms, regular screening plays a critical role in early detection and prevention.

“These new findings underscore the important role that fecal occult blood testing can play in reducing the incidence of colorectal cancer,” said Joel McComb, General Manager of Beckman Coulter Primary Care Diagnostics. Hemocult, the only fecal occult blood test used in this study, is a non-invasive, simple test that can be prepared in the privacy of one’s home. The triple slide screening system is designed to test bowel specimens over three days, which greatly increases the probability of detecting hidden blood.

If you or someone you know is at risk for colorectal cancer, talk to your doctor about what screening options and treatments are available. For information on the Hemocult family of products, including Hemocult and Hemocult SENSEA, visit www.beckmancoulter.com/screening or call toll-free at 1-800-352-3433.