

Colorectal Cancer: Now Medicare Covers The Test That Could Save Lives

(NAPSA)—Medicare now makes it easier for patients to pay for colorectal screenings, giving medical professionals hope that more people will get screened. Congress passed legislation in December 2000, which will expand Medicare benefits in terms of colorectal cancer screening exams. The gold standard test—screening colonoscopy, will be reimbursable as of July 1, 2001.

Unfortunately, there are barriers to getting the public to go for colorectal screening. No one wants to talk about colon cancer or colorectal screenings, but silence can be deadly. Although colon cancer is America's second most common cancer killer, you don't have to become a part of this statistic.

An estimated 130,000 Americans, both women and men, are diagnosed with colorectal cancer each year, and every year approximately, 56,000 will die. However, most of these deaths could be prevented through proper screening. Research indicates that colon cancer arises from precancerous growths or polyps that grow in the colon. When detected early, these growths or polyps can be removed, preventing the development of colon cancer.

Colon cancer is most common after the age of 50, and many national health organizations recommend that all individuals over the age of 50 should be screened for colon cancer. Why? Because colon cancer is a silent killer. Pre-



Talk to your doctor about getting screened for colon cancer. It could save your life.

cancerous growths or polyps develop for up to 10 years in the colon before they manifest themselves through bleeding or other symptoms of colorectal cancer. During this time, most people have absolutely no symptoms. Thus, you must discuss colon cancer screening with your physician even if you have no symptoms.

What are your screening options? Several different tests are available, including the definitive test—the colonoscopy. To learn more about this disease, which is preventable, treatable and beatable, contact your physician or call the American College of Gastroenterology at 1-800-978-7666. To request free information, write to the American College of Gastroenterology at PO Box 3099, Alexandria, VA 22302, or visit the ACG Web site at www.acg.gi.org.

Note to Editors: March was Colon Cancer Month