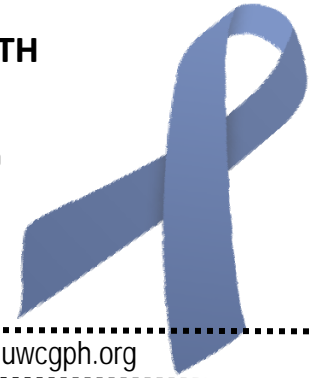




UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
CENTER FOR GENOMICS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Spotlight



MARCH 2011

<http://www.uwcgph.org>

Screening Saves Lives

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

In March 2000, Katie Couric underwent a live, televised colonoscopy on the Today Show to raise public awareness of colon cancer and the importance of colorectal cancer screening. March has been designated Colon Cancer Awareness Month to give national attention to this serious disease. Couric, who is now the CBS Evening News anchor, lost her husband,



Katie Couric is a strong advocate of colorectal cancer screening. She co-founded the National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance, a program of the Entertainment Industry Foundation.

Jay Monahan, to colon cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second most deadly cancer in both men and women. The American Cancer Society estimates that 101,340 new cases of colon cancer and 39,870 new cases of rectal cancer will be diagnosed in 2011. Yet, evidence shows that finding colon cancer early saves lives. Screening tests can help prevent colorectal cancer because polyps can be found by your doctor and then removed before they become cancerous.

Screening for colorectal cancer for most people should start at age 50,¹ according to several medical organizations and federal agencies, including the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Cancer Society.

Various screening tests are available.² These include:

- ◆ Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)
- ◆ Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- ◆ Fecal occult blood test plus

flexible sigmoidoscopy

- ◆ Double-contrast barium enema
- ◆ Colonoscopy

People with a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps are at increased risk for colorectal cancer. Inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease) and those with genetic syndromes such as familial adenomatous polyposis or hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer are also at increased risk. Most guidelines suggest that individuals at increased risk may need to begin screening earlier or have more frequent screening.³ It's best to talk to your doctor about what is right for you.

So, if you are over 50 or have other risk factors for colon cancer, make time this month to talk to your doctor about getting screened. If Katie Couric can do it, so can you. Talk to your doctor about what test is best for you and when you should begin screening.



Hereditary Colon Cancer Syndromes & Genetic Testing

Familial colon cancer and hereditary colon cancer syndromes both suggest a person may have inherited genetic variations that increase their risk of developing colon cancer. Syndromes such as hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC) and familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) significantly increase a person's risk of developing colon cancer, but both syndromes are relatively rare. If these syndromes are suspected in an individual, the American Cancer Society, U.S. Multisociety Task Force on Colorectal Cancer, and the American College of Radiology recommend the individuals receive counseling to consider genetic testing.

The Evaluation of Genomic Applications in Practice and Prevention (EGAPP) Working Group evaluated evidence to assess whether genetic testing for Lynch syndrome (HNPCC)

leads to better health outcomes for individuals with colorectal cancer and their family members.

EGAPP recommends that you get tested for Lynch syndrome if you are diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Lynch syndrome means being predisposed to certain cancers due to a gene mutation. Getting Lynch syndrome testing can help protect your relatives from colorectal and endometrial cancers. EGAPP is an independent, non-federal panel, supported by CDC's National Office of Public Health Genomics.

For more information on EGAPP, visit: www.egappreviews.org/about.htm

To see the evidence review, visit: www.egappreviews.org/recommendations/lynch.htm



Notes & References

1 The American College of Gastroenterology advises African Americans to begin screening at age 45. See full text at: www.aafp.org/afp/2009/0915/p647.html

2 "Colorectal Cancer: Basic Facts on Screening," Screen for Life, National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign; "Cancer: Colorectal Cancer Screening Guidelines," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; "Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement Clinical Performance Measures – Colorectal Cancer Screening," American Medical Association. www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/clinical-practice-improvement/clinical-quality/physician-consortium-performance-improvement.page

3 "Colorectal Cancer: Basic Facts on Screening;" "Cancer: Colorectal Cancer Screening Guidelines;" US Preventive Services Task Force's recommendation for persons at higher risk: www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/uspscoco.htm; American Cancer Society's Guidelines for Early Detection in People at Increased Risk or at High Risk: www.cancer.org/Cancer/ColonandRectumCancer/MoreInformation/ColonandRectumCancerEarlyDetection/colorectal-cancer-early-detection-acs-recommendations; and the consensus guidelines published by the American Cancer Society, U.S. Multisociety Task Force on Colorectal Cancer, and the American College of Radiology: <http://radiology.rsna.org/content/248/3/717.full>



Colon Cancer Resources

Find Out More about Colorectal Cancer Screening

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Colorectal (Colon) Cancer
www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/

Screen for Life: National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign
www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/sfl/

National Cancer Institute, NIH: Colon and Rectal Cancer
www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/colon-and-rectal

American Cancer Society: All About Colon and Rectal Cancer
www.cancer.org/Cancer/ColonandRectumCancer/index

Find Out More about the Genetics of Colon Cancer

National Cancer Institute, NIH: Genetics of Colorectal Cancer
www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/genetics/colorectal

Colon Cancer Alliance: Genetics
www.ccalliance.org/crc_news/genetics.html

National Human Genome Research Institute, NIH: Learning about Colon Cancer
www.genome.gov/page.cfm?pageID=10000466

Know Your Family Medical History: Tools to Help

National Office of Public Health Genomics, CDC: Family History Resources and Tools
www.cdc.gov/genomics/famhistory/famhist.htm

For more information on family history and genetic testing, visit us at www.uwcephp.org.

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