

ColonCancerCheck Update

Welcome to the first edition of ColonCancerCheck Update, a quarterly newsletter on Ontario's new colorectal cancer screening program and a channel for communications with our readers.

What is ColonCancerCheck?

In January, 2007, the Ontario government in collaboration with Cancer Care Ontario announced the launch of a new province-wide colorectal cancer screening program. The five-year, \$193.5-million initiative is the first of its kind in Canada and will provide regular colorectal cancer screening to all asymptomatic Ontarians 50 years and older.

The program goals are to reduce mortality from colorectal cancer through an organized screening program and to improve the capacity for primary care to participate in comprehensive colorectal cancer screening. ColonCancerCheck will do this by expanding access to screening, supporting physicians and other health care professionals to screen patients, and educating the public about colorectal cancer screening. The screening method will be determined by risk profile.

"The program is funding the Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) for all average risk men and women 50 years and older and additional colonoscopies for those at increased risk because they have one or more family members with colorectal cancer, and for people who have a positive FOBT," says George Smitherman, Ontario's Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "Thousands of people in Ontario are lost to colorectal cancer every year yet with early detection there is a 90 per cent chance of being cured of this disease."

Terry Sullivan, President & CEO of Cancer Care Ontario, says that screening is the best weapon we have in the fight against colorectal cancer. "The name of the game here is early detection. It's critical that health care professionals talk to patients and remind them about the tests and the ColonCancerCheck program will support them to offer screening and follow-up. Research shows that a personal recommendation from a family physician dramatically increases participation in cancer screening."

Fast Facts

In 2007, an estimated 7,800 Ontarians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer; 3,250 will die from it.

Ontario has one of the highest rates of colorectal cancer in the world.

Although colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of death from cancer, it is curable 90 per cent of the time if detected in its early stages.

During 2004-2005, only 17 per cent of Ontarians 50 years and older had an FOBT in the preceding two years, according to the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario/Cancer Care Ontario Cancer System Quality Index.

ColonCancerCheck Milestones

- In May, 2007, the province announced \$11 million to fund 34,432 additional colonoscopies in 54 Ontario hospitals during 2007/08.
- In June, 2007, these hospitals began to report into the new Colonoscopy Interim Reporting Tool (CIRT) to help measure, monitor, and track wait times, the reason for the colonoscopy, and quality indicators.
 - Participating hospitals started implementing a streamlined process for colonoscopy referrals, including dedicated fax lines.
- In August, 2007, new evidence-based colonoscopy standards were finalized for Ontario clinicians who perform colonoscopies as part of ColonCancerCheck. These were published in the Canadian Journal of Gastroenterology and are posted at: http://www.cancercare.on.ca/index_cancerScreeningguidelines.htm.
- FOBT standards have been developed for the program and will be published by March, 2008.
- In fall, 2007, a health care provider awareness and support campaign was launched to build a strong knowledge base with providers, prior to the commencement of the public education campaign in early 2008.
- Information kits, patient counseling materials, clinical references, journal articles, and a multi-faceted Continuing Education program are being rolled out in partnership with the Ontario College of Family Physicians, Pharmacists' Association of Ontario and the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario.
- Information forums for health care professionals and stakeholders have been held in all 14 regions to introduce the program and to engage clinicians locally, all across the province.

The Global View

In 2007, Ontario joined a growing number of countries – including the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, France, Finland, and Israel – that are implementing organized colorectal cancer screening programs based on FOBT. Within Canada, Manitoba and Alberta have recently announced colorectal cancer screening programs while British Columbia, Quebec and Nova Scotia are developing proposals.

Those jurisdictions with population-based FOBT screening programs have reached participation rates of up to 70 per cent in their initial years.

Questions, Comments or Feedback

We want to hear from you!

By phone:
1-866-662-9233

For more information go to:
www.cancercare.on.ca

By email:
colorectalcancerscreening@cancercare.on.ca



What's Ahead

Roll-out of Health Professional Awareness Campaign.

ColonCancerCheck FOBT kits distributed to primary care providers, pharmacies, and through Telehealth.

Launch of Public Awareness Campaign.