

New Test Makes Colon Cancer Detection Easier

(NAPSA)—Many people 50 and older may be relieved to know doctors now have a convenient new test to help check for colon cancer.

The new method identifies the cancer's genetic material in a blood sample taken from the patient's arm. The results help the doctor determine if there's a strong likelihood that colon cancer is present. If so, additional testing may be recommended.

Why Testing Is Important

Testing is important because colon cancer (also called colorectal cancer) is treatable when caught early, but often has no symptoms and goes undetected. About half the people who should be tested are not, so only about 40 percent of cases are diagnosed in early stages. Colon cancer is the third most common cancer in men and women in the U.S., with more than 51,000 deaths expected this year.

According to the American Cancer Society, most men and women should be tested beginning at the age of 50 up until the age of 75. Individuals with special risks, such as a family history or who are smokers, as well as African Americans, should be tested even earlier.

"Undertesting for colon cancer is a major health problem in the U.S.," said Dr. Jon R. Cohen, Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for Quest Diagnostics, the nation's leading diagnostics testing company and developer of the new test.

Colonoscopy is the best method for detecting colon cancer early and the one patients should consider first. It will detect colon cancer 95 percent of the time and a doctor can remove precancerous growths during the procedure.

Colonoscopy is invasive, however, involving a long tube inserted through the rectum and colon. Fecal tests are also good



A new, more convenient blood test can help detect colon cancer.

choices for colon cancer screening, but some people find sample collection unpleasant. Other recommended tests include flexible sigmoidoscopy and double-contrast barium enema.

"While colonoscopy is the best method for detecting colon cancer, many patients resist the procedure," said Dr. Cohen. "Advanced new blood testing may promote evaluation of patients who refuse to be tested by other methods."

Your doctor can order the new blood test, called ColoVantage, from Quest Diagnostics. There are no dietary restrictions or special preparations and the test can be added to routine blood work. In a clinical validation study, ColoVantage correctly identified colon cancer in 70 percent of samples of people diagnosed with the cancer. It also correctly detected the absence of colon cancer in about 89 percent of samples tested. As with any noncolonoscopy test, a positive test result should be followed up by colonoscopy for a more definitive diagnosis as appropriate under the guidance of a doctor.

Learn More

For more information about your options for colon cancer testing, speak with your doctor and log on to www.QuestDiagnostics.com.