



Poll: One in Three Adults 60-70 Years of Age Screened for Colon Cancer Have Only Done So Once, Suggesting Failure to Follow Periodic Testing Guidelines

June 27, 2011

Poll also finds while most screened opt for colonoscopy, those who do not cite unpleasant bowel preparation and side effects as the chief reasons they prefer a different colon cancer test

WASHINGTON, June 27, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Results from a nationwide research poll released today by the Colon Cancer Alliance and Quest Diagnostics (NYSE: DGX) suggest that one in three of men and women age 60-70 who have been screened for colon cancer have done so only once, suggesting a failure to follow medical guidelines that call for periodic testing after initial screening at age 50 by colonoscopy and other methods. The poll also shows that men and women age 50 years and older who have been screened for colon cancer but not by colonoscopy cite the colonoscopy's unpleasant bowel preparation and side effects as the chief reasons they selected a different colon cancer test.

American Cancer Society guidelines recommend that men and women of average risk for developing colon cancer begin screening at age 50. Recommended screening tests include colonoscopy (every 10 years), flexible sigmoidoscopy or virtual colonoscopy (every five years), and fecal occult blood (FOBT) and fecal immunochemical (FIT) tests (annually).

Of those in the 60 to 70 year age range, 33 percent claimed they had been screened once and 22 percent said they had been screened twice. Twenty-four percent in this age group said they had never been screened.

The poll also showed that among all men and women age 50 years or over who said they had been screened in the past:

- 40 percent have been screened once
- 22 percent have been screened twice
- 12 percent have been screened three times
- 18 percent have been screened four or more times

"The survey suggests that people are not being screened at a rate of frequency that reflects adherence to medical guidelines for colon cancer testing," said Andrew Spiegel, CEO of the Colon Cancer Alliance. "It is possible that many patients, after being screened once, are lulled into a false sense of security and fail to undergo additional testing."

The survey also found that of those who had been screened but not by colonoscopy, 22 percent cited unpleasant bowel preparation (including laxatives and fasting) as the primary reason, followed by side effects from the procedure or preparation (20 percent) or fear of the procedure or anesthesia (20 percent). Nearly one in five (17 percent) said their healthcare provider had not recommended a colonoscopy.

"Colonoscopy is the best colon cancer test. But unfortunately, many patients find colonoscopy and many other colon cancer tests inconvenient, invasive and basically unpleasant," said Dr. Jon R. Cohen, senior vice president and chief medical officer, Quest Diagnostics. "While patient education about the value of testing is vital to improving screening rates, the medical and diagnostic industry needs to do more to develop technological innovations that make it easy for patients to be reliably tested for colon cancer."

The survey also examined how individuals had learned guidelines calling for screening to begin at age 50 years for patients of average risk. While 80 percent of these respondents claimed their healthcare provider had told them about the guidelines, 31 percent and 23 percent said they knew of the guidelines from family and friends respectively. Twelve percent cited the Internet as a source.

"Clearly, family and friends as well as healthcare providers can influence public understanding of the value of colon cancer testing," said Spiegel. "Each of us has the power to help our loved ones make decisions that favorably affect their health."

A summary of the survey results was unveiled during the Colon Cancer Alliance's national conference "Family Matters: What You and Your Family Need to Know about Colon Cancer," which was held June 23-25 in Denver.

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States, but is often treatable when caught in early stages. Sixty percent of colon cancer deaths could be prevented if people were screened as indicated by guidelines, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Polling Methodology

The Colon Cancer Alliance and Quest Diagnostics worked with national survey firm ORC International, an infoGroup company, which conducted a national probability phone study among 1,304 men and women 50 years of age and over to gauge their level of awareness about colon cancer screening, adherence to American Cancer Society guidelines and barriers to screening. There were 614 men and 690 women surveyed in May 2011. The survey was funded through an educational grant from Quest Diagnostics.

Colon Cancer Alliance

The Colon Cancer Alliance is the oldest and largest national patient advocacy organization dedicated to ending the suffering caused by colorectal cancer. In order to increase rates of screening and survivorship, the Colon Cancer Alliance provides patient support, public education, supports research and conducts advocacy work across the United States. Visit <http://www.ccalliance.org/>.

About Quest Diagnostics

Quest Diagnostics is the world's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services that patients and doctors need to make better

healthcare decisions. The company offers the broadest access to diagnostic testing services through its network of laboratories and patient service centers, and provides interpretive consultation through its extensive medical and scientific staff. Quest Diagnostics is a pioneer in developing innovative new diagnostic tests and advanced healthcare information technology solutions that help improve patient care.

Quest Diagnostics is a leader in colon cancer testing. The company offers the ColoVantage(TM) test, the first blood-plasma DNA test in the U.S. for aiding in the detection of colon cancer, based on the Septin9 DNA biomarker owned by Epigenomics AG. The company also offers the Insure® FIT test as well as several genetic tests, including EGFR pathway analysis, for aiding in therapy selection for colon cancer.

Additional company information is available at QuestDiagnostics.com. Follow us at Facebook.com/QuestDiagnostics and Twitter.com/QuestDX.

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