

The website is called [shopalot...](#)



Screening rates low for colorectal cancer

'Still stigma out there' MD says in study

September 11, 2007

JOSEPH HALL
HEALTH REPORTER

A woefully small number of Canadians are being screened for colorectal cancers, the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the country, according to a study published yesterday.

And despite new screening programs in Ontario and other provinces, better education and promotional efforts are required in order to get testing rates up, said the study's lead author.

"We need to give it the same attention that breast cancer gets," said Dr. Ryan Zarychanski, a research fellow at the Ottawa Health Research Institute.

The study, published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, showed about 18 per cent of 12,776 men and women in the study group between the ages of 50 and 74 got screened for colorectal cancers. Only 8 per cent of people who do not regularly see a family doctor bothered to get screened.

By comparison, 75 to 85 per cent of eligible women between the ages of 50 and 69 undergo breast exams, such as mammography and 90 per cent of women receive pap smears for cervical cancer.

"And that's why I think it's important to let people know we have a really good test here that can decrease your mortality related to this cancer if you (participate)," he said.

The risk of dying from colorectal cancers decreases by at least 15 per cent for those screened, and the chances of dying drop by 90 per cent with early detection. Colorectal malignancies kill 8,700 Canadians annually, second to lung cancer.

Zarychanski says there are several reasons for this low compliance rate, including reluctance on the part of patients to discuss a distasteful subject.

But Macushla Ginivan, of Toronto, a 14-year colorectal cancer survivor, said people must get over their embarrassment in order to live.

"There's still that stigma out there and I've been through it myself," said the 70 year old. "What I say now is don't be embarrassed about stool. There's nothing dirty about it, it's just the garbage coming out from your body."

Despite widespread medical information, many doctors are unsure which of three common colorectal exams to order for their patients, Zarychanski says.

Heather Chappell, of the Canadian Cancer Society, says the study points to a need for expanded education and promotional programs surrounding the screening process.