

**Colorectal Cancer Educational Campaign  
University of Kentucky (UK)  
Prevention Research Center (PRC)**

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**Introduction**

The Perry County Health Initiative Action Team/Community Advisory Board serves as a formal link between communities in Appalachian Kentucky and the University of Kentucky Prevention Research Center. The Perry County HIAT/CAB is composed of local community members and meets monthly in Hazard, Kentucky. The Perry County HIAT/CAB supported national Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month (March, 2006) by conducting a colorectal cancer campaign targeting residents of Perry and surrounding counties in Kentucky. The campaign was designed to increase awareness of colorectal cancer and the importance of screening and consisted of media activities, dissemination of colorectal cancer education materials, and a follow-up survey assessing knowledge about colorectal cancer and screening. This report describes efforts to disseminate educational materials and summarizes findings from the follow-up survey.

The Perry County HIAT/CAB distributed approximately 5500 brochures prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Eleven employers circulated these brochures to approximately 3600 of their employees with their pay envelopes. Additionally, roughly 1800 brochures were made available to patients and the general public. The distribution of these brochures can be seen below:

	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Total</u>
Appalachian Regional Hospital/ Area Health Education Center	1231	669	1900

UK Center for Rural Health	300		300
Kentucky River Health Department	210		210
Little Flower Clinic	110	490	600
LKLP Community Action Agency	300		300
Perry County Schools	400		400
Primary Care Centers of Eastern Kentucky		100	100
Trus Joist/American Woodmark	1000		1000
UK Family Practice		100	100
Walmart		500	500
WYMT-TV	55		55

Employees who received these brochures also were invited to participate in answering a short questionnaire and were informed that there would be a lottery with three \$100 prizes for those who responded and either mailed their questionnaire back or deposited in a drop box at their place of employment (Appendix A). By the cut-off date, 230 questionnaires had been received. The vast majority of respondents (roughly 70%) were affiliated with health departments, the Appalachian Regional Hospital, or other health care providers.

## Results

### Questions That Most People Knew

- Blood with a bowel movement could be a symptom of colorectal cancer (**100%** responded correctly)
- Screening for colorectal cancer might “save my life” (**100%** responded correctly)
- Small growths or polyps can turn into cancer (**99.1%** responded correctly)
- There are tests for detecting polyps or colorectal cancer (**99.1%** responded correctly)

- Losing weight without trying could be a symptom of colorectal cancer (**96.5%** responded correctly)
- Many insurance plans pay for tests that check for colorectal cancer (**96.5%** responded correctly)
- Colorectal cancer occurs most often in people over the age of 50 (**84.7%** responded correctly)

### **The Question That Most People Missed**

- Colorectal cancer is the leading cancer killer in the U.S. (**41.9%** answered “True.”)

However, colorectal cancer is actually the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cancer killer.

### **The “Impact” Question**

- “I am planning to ask my physician to test me for colorectal cancer sometime in the next 12 months” (**42%** responded affirmatively).

When the responses to the planning to be tested for colorectal cancer item were examined by age division, 67.6% of those 50 years of age or older indicated that they planned on being tested for colorectal cancer in the next 12 months compared to 32% of those under 50 years of age. This was a statistically significant difference ( $X^2=25.3$ , 1 df,  $p=.000$ )

### **Discussion**

While the response rate (6% of the employees) to the colorectal cancer survey brochure was lower than might be desired, a positive reframe of the situation is that at least upwards of 5,000 people received the brochure. While it cannot be determined how many of these actually read the pamphlet, there is a possibility that many of these individuals may have passed the brochure on to others so that actually more than 5,000 could have benefited from the information about this form of deadly cancer.

It is good news that those who responded to the questionnaire seemed to be relatively informed about colorectal cancer. More than 95% of the respondents answered six of the eight “quiz” items correctly. Seven of the eight questions were answered correctly by 85% or more of the respondents.

The only item that caused difficulty was the first one, “Colorectal cancer is the leading cancer killer in the U.S.” Forty-two percent of the respondents indicated that the statement was correct when, in fact, colorectal cancer is the *second* leading cancer killer in the U.S. Thus, respondents may have guessed that colorectal cancer was the leading killer without reading the brochure or referring back to it; an alternative explanation is that perhaps the item was too much of a “trick” question.

It would seem to be more important that the respondents recognized the signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer, and almost everyone recognized the three leading symptoms associated with this form of cancer. That’s encouraging. On the other hand, most of the respondents were employed by a health care organization. It is difficult to know whether the respondents had information about colorectal cancer prior to receiving the brochure or whether they obtained their knowledge from the brochure.

An indication that the respondents take the threat of colorectal cancer seriously is that slightly less than half were planning to talk to their doctor about getting screened for this form of cancer even though slightly more than two-thirds of the respondents were younger than 50. Sixty-eight percent of those 50 or older indicated that they would be requesting screening for colorectal cancer from their physician. While health care providers would perhaps like that percentage to be still higher, it is important to keep in mind that some respondents may have had a colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, or other screening procedure in the recent past. With a clean bill of health, these individuals could well fall outside the 12 month time frame stated in the survey and not need the procedure repeated again for three or four years. In fact, 10 respondents wrote on their questionnaires (even though the information wasn’t requested) that they had either already made appointments for screening or been screened in the last 2-3 years.

In conclusion, it appears that the respondents who completed the survey were relatively well-informed about the danger of colorectal cancer and how it might present itself through signs and symptoms. If this effort is repeated again next year, it might be worthwhile to target the general public and employers whose employees are not so prominently situated in the health care field. Along this line, small retail businesses might be targeted. Involving local scout troops to distribute and drop off the brochures might be another method for involving yet another segment of the community.

## Appendix A



UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY  
**Prevention Research Center**

Community organizations and the Prevention Research Center in Hazard are working together to increase awareness about colorectal cancer among residents of Perry and surrounding counties. Recently you received a brochure in your pay envelope about colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer is a very common cancer, but one that not many people talk about. Trying to educate the public about it is a big job.

To help us determine whether the brochures are helping people learn about colorectal cancer, we've created a few questions we'd like you to answer. In return, we'll enter your name and the names of all the other responders in the region in a lottery jackpot for **three prizes of \$100** each. All you have to do is to circle the answers to the questions below and mail it to the address provided. We'll notify the winner in about 6 weeks. This is not a gimmick or advertisement and your name/address will not be used for any other purpose. Your responses are completely confidential and do not have to be entirely correct to win. If you wish to enter the lottery, please complete the information on the next page.

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1. True or False. Colorectal cancer is the leading cancer killer in the U.S.
  2. True or False. Colorectal cancer occurs most often in people under the age of 50.
  3. True or False. Losing weight without trying could be a symptom of colorectal cancer.
  4. True or False. Blood with a bowel movement could be a symptom of colorectal cancer.
  5. True or False. Small growths or polyps in the colon or rectum can turn into cancer.
  6. True or False. Many insurance plans pay for tests that check for colorectal cancer.
  7. True or False. There are tests for detecting polyps or colorectal cancer.
  8. True or False. Screening for colorectal cancer might save my life.
  9. Yes or No. I am planning to ask my physician to test me for colorectal cancer sometime in the next 12 months.
  10. Yes or No. I am 50 years of age or older.
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Information needed for lottery contest:

1. My name:  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. My address:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Or

E-mail address:  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. My place of employment:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Fold both pieces of this questionnaire into thirds, secure it with a piece of scotch tape or place in an envelope and mail by April 30, 2006 to:

**Sandy Good**  
**UK Prevention Research Center, B-331D**  
**Center for Rural Health**  
**750 Morton Blvd**  
**Hazard, Kentucky 41701**

Winners will be notified by May 12, 2006.

Thank you!