New Screening Approach FIT to Fight Colorectal Cancer in the U.S.

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CORTLANDT MANOR, N.Y., Nov. 11, 2010 /PRNewswire/ -- Colorectal cancer (CRC) are two words that most people don't want to talk or even think about. But for 50,000 Americans every year, the disease takes their life. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death; a figure that may dramatically decrease if Americans are regularly screened for this treatable disease. Colorectal cancer, if detected early, is one of the most curable cancers.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that people ages 50 to 75 receive an annual fecal occult blood test (FOBT), either the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) or guaiac type, that checks for hidden blood in the stool. This age group should also undergo a sigmoidoscopy procedure every five years, and colonoscopy every 10 years to check for signs of colorectal cancer.

An aggressive preventive screening program, like the one at Kaiser Permanente, uses the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) for convenient and accurate annual screening. FIT is a take-home test used for detecting gastrointestinal bleeding associated with disorders such as colorectal cancer, polyps and colitis. Screening rates for colorectal cancer lag far behind screening for other diseases, like cervical and breast cancer. Kaiser Permanente has already seen a 28 percent increase in the diagnosis of early, curable colon cancers.

"At Kaiser Permanente, we believe that if there is more focus on prevention and education, rather than on illness, this country could eliminate or greatly decrease diseases such as cancer of the colon and rectum," said Dr. Jeffrey Weisz, Oncologist and Executive Medical Director for Kaiser Permanente Southern California. "We are proving this theory and putting it into practice with simple screening tests."

Weisz says screening is the most realistic approach to reducing new cases by finding non-cancerous colorectal polyps and removing them before they become cancerous. Prior
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