



## HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY

# **CANCER SCREENINGS**

Compiled by Insite Staff

Texas A&M Health Science Center recently received another \$1.5 million grant from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas that will enable a colorectal screening program to continue another three years and expand its outreach to an additional 10 counties across central Texas.

The C-STEP program (Cancer Screening, Training, Education and Prevention), run by Texas A&M Health Science Center, has two main components – it provides funding to help low-income people receive colonoscopies and it trains young physicians in the Texas A&M College of Medicine’s family medicine residency program to perform colonoscopies.

The program began in 2011 with a three-year, \$2.7 million grant from CPRIT, and in its first three years, family medicine residents performed more than 1,200 colonoscopies, of which more than 800 were funded by CPRIT. Through these colonoscopies, polyps were discovered in 275 people and 11 cases of cancer were found. With the latest funding, the C-STEP program will expand outreach to 17 total counties, with

a second screening location in Crockett. The program currently sees patients out of the Bryan Medical Center in Bryan. Colorectal cancer currently ranks third in cancer incidence and cancer-related deaths for men and women in the United

### **COLORECTAL CANCER CURRENTLY RANKS THIRD IN CANCER INCIDENCE AND CANCER-RELATED DEATHS FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES**

States. The incidence of colon cancer is higher in rural communities, and African-Americans tend to have higher rates of colon cancer than some other population groups.

While colonoscopies are recommended every 10 years beginning at age 50, only about half the people who should be screened for colorectal cancer actually get a colonoscopy. One reason for this is that while Medicaid often covers cancer treatment for the uninsured, it

doesn’t provide for routine screenings such as colonoscopies, which can cost anywhere from \$800 to more than \$3,000.

The C-STEP program does not cover cancer treatment, but it does help patients try to identify possible sources of help such as Medicare or Medicaid. Of the 11 cases of cancer that have been found thanks to the C-STEP program, all of them were found early enough that the patients have a good chance of surviving. Patients who had polyps removed are being monitored to make sure they do not develop cancer.

C-STEP program representatives hope the screening program will serve as a national model for reducing the incidence of colon cancer, as well as incorporating cancer prevention, screening and education into family medicine residency training programs.

The latest funding expands colorectal cancer screenings to a 17-county area, including: Brazos, Burleson, Robertson, Leon, Madison, Grimes, Walker, Montgomery, Washington, Waller, Lee, Milam, Falls, Limestone, Freestone, Houston and Trinity. *i*