

Can You Hear Me Now?

By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB

It's been a little over a year now since the General Manager and Editor of this newspaper went well beyond the boundary of good taste and allowed me to write about the Big "C" procedure I went through at the time. And it was a two-part series to boot!

In case you forgot, the procedure to which I am referring is a colonoscopy. It is one that all of us around 40 or 50 years of age need to go through to insure our good health and well being.

This one year anniversary of sorts means one thing- only nine more years before I have to go through another one again.

I have to say though that, during the past year, many people have commented to me that they were deeply touched by my article- not as deeply touched as I was when I went through the procedure.

Nevertheless, they did thank me for the little bit of humor interwoven with the real message that I had to offer- you have nothing to fear but the anxiety itself. Some people have told me they actually put off delaying the procedure and faced it head on- or rather with their back to the doctor, whatever position you wish to take.

In any event, the message is still the same. Early detection through screenings like sigmoidoscopies and colonoscopies and have been responsible, in part, for a decrease in deaths associated with colon or colorectal cancer. The former examines a small portion of the descending colon while the latter can view the entire colon.

The large intestine is about 1 ½ meters long and includes the cecum, colon, rectum and anal canal. I hope you're not eating dinner at this time.

The vermiform appendix is attached to the cecum. In humans, the appendix has no function in digestion.

The colon is the largest portion of the large intestine and is divided into the ascending, transverse, descending and sigmoid portions.

The functions of the large intestine are to absorb fluids and electrolytes and to eliminate waste products.

If polyps are present in the colon, they can be removed during screening procedures. These polyps can develop into cancer. So their removal decreases the risk of this deadly disease.

Colon cancer has been ranked as the 3rd most common cancer killer in the United States. On some hit parades it ranks 2nd. Either way you look at it, it's important to be aware of the condition of our large intestine.

Diet and lifestyle can also affect colorectal cancer risk. Some studies suggest that a diet high in fiber and/or fruits and vegetables along with calcium, and Vitamins D and E may lower the risk of colon cancer.

Other studies show that colorectal cancer risk can be decreased by high doses of folic acid along with some physical activity and cutting down on drinking and smoking.

In addition, a diet rich in fish, especially salmon and whole grains, is recommended. Foods to avoid include red meats, animal fat and refined (white) sugar.

Many of these diet recommendations are solid and well grounded in general medical research although their specific effect in curing or preventing cancer is not proven. But none of them can hurt you, either.

Colon cancer kills over 100,000 people in the United States each year. Once again, early diagnosis and treatment are the keys to surviving this disease.

So if you want to increase your odds at living a longer and healthier life, it's time for you to get scoped out. It really, really doesn't hurt at all.

Thanks to my good friend, Chuck, I'd like to share with you a list of top ten comments made by patients to their doctors while undergoing a colonoscopy. These are supposedly actual comments, believe it or not.

10. "Take it easy, doc. You're boldly going where no man has gone before!"
9. "Can you hear me now?"
8. "Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Are we there yet?"
7. "You know, in Arkansas, we're now legally married."
6. "Any sign of the trapped miners yet, chief?"
5. "You put your left hand in, you take your left hand out..."
4. "Hey! Now I know how a Muppet feels!"
3. "If your hand doesn't fit, you must quit!"
2. "Find Jimmy Hoffa yet?"
1. "Could you write a note for my wife saying that my head is not up here?"

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