

Prevention and Treatment of Colorectal Cancer

Mercy Hospital Medical Partners

by Steven A. Wicinski

Of all cancers that exist today excluding skin cancers, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in both men and women in the United States. As of 2011, the American Cancer Society estimates that 101,340 new cases of colon cancer are diagnosed in the U.S. each year.

“Colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable, curable conditions as long as patients undergo early, universal screenings,” says colorectal surgeon Michael D. Hellinger, M.D., FACS, FASCRS. “Although the disease is 90 percent preventable, only about 40 percent of people in the United States are being appropriately screened.

“Mercy Hospital Medical Partners in Miami is comprised of a dedicated, multidisciplinary group of physicians who provide the entire spectrum of colorectal care,” adds Dr. Hellinger. “Unlike other facilities, we provide our patients with the full gamut of colorectal care. We can diagnose colorectal conditions, perform colonoscopies, and, if necessary, perform any necessary surgical or non-surgical treatment options, under one roof.”

When it comes to performing colon and rectal surgeries, Mercy Hospital Medical Partners leads the leaders in minimally invasive, cutting-edge procedures including laparoscopic, robotic and microsurgical natural-orifice surgery. Some of these techniques, offered in only a handful of institutions across the nation, ensure colon and rectal tissue can not only be safely removed, but results in smaller or unidentifiable incisions, minimal to no scarring, shorter hospital stay, less pain and risk of infection, and much quicker recovery time for patients.

Promoting Better Patient Outcome

“We place a lot of emphasis on speeding up recovery and ensuring the best patient outcome,” notes Dr. Hellinger. “We have established our *Accelerated Care Pathways* program. After colon and rectal surgery, patients are up and out of bed as soon as possible, we administer medication to get bowels to recover quickly, prevent blood clots in legs, prevent pulmonary infections, as well as provide special dietary protocols to aid digestive health and promote a speedy patient recovery.

“Clearly, statistics suggest that nearly 60 percent of Americans still don’t get screened for colorectal disorders. This is mostly due to fear, embarrassment, or simple lack of awareness. So my main message here is prevention and detection. People need to seek regular screenings. And with today’s technology, the process is easier and more comfortable than ever before. Screening saves lives.”

Serving the healthcare needs of South Florida for 60 years, Mercy Hospital is a comprehensive healthcare facility that offers a full range of services to the residents of Miami-Dade county and surrounding communities. With over 700 physicians, the facility represents 27 medical specialties. To learn more, call (305) 285-2929 or visit <http://mercymiami.com/>

Sidebar – Signs of colorectal cancer

- Change in bowel habits, such as constipation or diarrhea that lasts more than a couple weeks.
- Feeling like the bowel does not empty completely.
- Bright red or very dark blood in the stool.
- Black stools, which may indicate hidden blood.
- Stools that look unusually narrow or thin.
- Abdominal discomfort such as frequent gas pains, bloating, fullness, or cramps.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Constant tiredness or fatigue.
- Unexplained anemia (low number of red blood cells).