

VITALS

March's Blue Ribbon
Event: Colorectal
Cancer Awareness
Month

A healthcare professional wearing blue scrubs and a red stethoscope is holding a red ribbon with white text. The ribbon is held by blue gloves. The background is a solid dark color.

**MARCH IS COLON CANCER
AWARENESS MONTH**

March's Blue Ribbon Event: Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



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Hardly anyone likes to talk about this particular disease, but every year colorectal cancer – cancer of the colon or rectum – is diagnosed in almost 140,000 people, almost 50,000 die from it, making it one of the leading causes of cancer deaths. March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, symbolized by the blue ribbon. So this is a good time to be talking about how this nasty cancer can be prevented, and the ways that P/SL surgeons treat it.

The bad news about colorectal cancer is that it's often symptomless, especially in the early stages. “The good news is that with screening it can be prevented or found early when treatment is most effective,” said Dr. Graham Sellers, a colorectal surgeon with Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center.

More than 90 percent of colorectal

cancers occur in people 50 and older, so that's when regular screening is recommended to begin. There's been a 60 percent increase in screening rates within the last five years but one-third of the target population still isn't getting screened.

“When we do a colonoscopy, which right now is the gold standard for screening, we can remove polyps which might turn into cancer later,” Sellers said. Colonoscopy involves inserting a lighted tube with a camera through the rectum into the colon so the doctor can see any polyps and remove them.

People older than 50 are usually advised to get a colonoscopy every 10 years, unless they are considered at higher risk because of family history or earlier screenings have found polyps.

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Colon Cancer At-A-Glance



3rd LEADING CAUSE

Colon Cancer is third leading cause of cancer-related deaths in U.S. (men and women)

49,700

DEATHS IN 2015



Expected to cause 49,700 deaths in 2015

90%

SURVIVAL RATE IF CAUGHT EARLY



If found and treated early the 5-year survival rate is 90%

50+

YEARS & OLDER



Risk increases over the age of 50

Reduce your risk by maintaining a healthy weight, active lifestyle, healthy diet, avoid tobacco products



March's Blue Ribbon Event: *continued*

Other screening options are available; your doctor can advise on what will be best for you. Researchers are working on discovering more effective and more pleasant ways of screening for colorectal cancer.

If cancer is detected during screening, surgery may be called for. "People with colorectal cancer are often good candidates for minimally invasive surgery, which means it can be done with only a couple of tiny incisions and patients recover more quickly and with less pain," Sellers said.

Dr. Sellers and other surgeons at P/SL are using our new da Vinci Xi robotic system for some colorectal cancer surgeries because of its precision and its ability to work well in very confined spaces in the body. But the real goal is to catch colorectal cancer before it starts through screening. Spread the word: March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month!

Colorectal surgeons, Dr. Warren Strutt, Dr. Craig Brown and Dr. Graham Sellers with the new da Vinci Xi Surgical System at P/SL.

