

## Cancer Prevention & Control



### FACING THE ISSUES

- *Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in the United States; more than 1,500 people die from cancer every day.*
- *For many types of cancers, the rates of disease and death are much higher in racial and ethnic minority groups than in the majority population.*
- *The number of new cases of and deaths from cancer can be reduced by making cancer screening and referral services easily available and accessible to all Americans.*
- *A person's risk for cancer can be significantly reduced by following a healthy lifestyle—for example, avoiding tobacco use and achieving optimal weight.*

*CDC's Prevention Research Centers promote cancer prevention and screening because early diagnosis and treatment can decrease cancer rates and increase survival.*

### Networking for Prevention

A set of Prevention Research Centers (PRCs) forms a Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network that aims to reduce risk-related behaviors (e.g., tobacco use), decrease exposure to cancer-causing agents, and increase use of screening for early cancer detection. The network focuses on inequality in cancer rates and deaths among people of low income and minority groups, identifies successful cancer prevention and control interventions, and develops ways these effective strategies can be used in communities. Located throughout the country, these PRCs enhance partnerships and allow research in diverse communities in both urban and rural areas.

Although all cancers have enormous health and economic impact on communities, PRC researchers are focusing primarily on colorectal cancer and cancers that affect the reproductive system. Illness and death associated with these types of cancers can often be prevented through early detection.

### Focus on Colorectal Cancer

To decrease the estimated 140,000 new cases of colorectal cancer each year, people age 50 or older should be periodically screened by colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy. PRC researchers are studying risks and complications, such as unplanned hospitalization, associated with colonoscopy. For sigmoidoscopy, PRC researchers are testing a training model for health care providers designed to increase cancer screening in primary care. One PRC is comparing the cost-effectiveness of colonoscopy and sigmoidoscopy. Information is being assessed from Medicare, medical claims information, a health maintenance organization, and other sources. Researchers will identify factors that account for differences in cost.

### Focus on Women's Health

**Breast Cancer.** Breast cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among women. To detect breast cancer in its earliest, most treatable stage, women age 40 or older should have a mammogram



The Prevention Research Centers are a network of academic health centers, partner communities, and public health practitioners that conduct community-based participatory research to prevent disease and disability.

every 1 to 2 years. Researchers at one PRC surveyed 800 Korean American women about their cancer knowledge, source of health information, preventive health practices, and barriers to screening and found that fear, embarrassment, language, and lack of health insurance may keep some women from being screened. This information has been used to design culturally appropriate programs to encourage the women to have mammograms.

**Cervical Cancer.** Each year, more than 10,000 new cases of invasive cervical cancer are diagnosed and over 3,000 women die from the disease. Pap tests can detect both precancerous and cancerous cells in the cervix. Researchers at one PRC are exploring why some women who receive abnormal Pap test results do not return for additional tests. They also are interviewing health care providers and holding focus groups with women to identify demographic characteristics, social and psychological factors, and health conditions associated with not receiving timely follow-up care. Results will help shape questions for one-on-one interviews with women and help educate health care providers.

**Ovarian Cancer.** Of all cancers affecting women's reproductive systems, ovarian cancer causes the most deaths. Early symptoms of the disease are often vague and overlooked. Researchers at several PRCs are asking women with ovarian cancer to recall the signs and

symptoms they had before diagnosis. Physicians are being asked which symptoms prompt tests and treatments. The results will help increase women's and physicians'

## Spotlight on Success

**In 1994, survey data showed that Korean American women in one local community were less often screened for breast and cervical cancer than were all women in the area. Researchers at the local PRC collaborated with Korean American churches and other community organizations to develop, implement, and test a 4-year community intervention that included educational workshops and a media and poster campaign to encourage screening. Surveys were again administered in 2002, and results indicated that mammography screening increased significantly among Korean American women, especially those age 50 or older.**

awareness of and knowledge about ovarian cancer and contribute to the development of a tool to help women and their doctors identify early warning signs of the disease.

## Focus on Men's Health

For men, prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths, and the number of prostate

cancer cases and deaths are highest among African American men. Several PRCs are studying how to increase prostate cancer screening among African American men and identify differences in treatment, health status, and quality of life between African American and white men with prostate cancer.

Another PRC is developing a CD-ROM that gives users facts about the effect of prostate cancer screening decisions on their lives and the various treatment options available. Researchers at still another PRC are evaluating a telephone counseling program for African American men (45 or older) who have family members or friends with prostate cancer. If the program is found to be helpful, researchers will make it available for use by cancer information and health care provider hotlines.

Additional studies are comparing the quality of life and health status of men with prostate cancer whose cancer was detected by screening versus symptoms. These studies also seek to identify which group is more likely to require surgery. The scientific work at these PRCs contributes to educating men about prostate cancer and helping them make informed decisions about screening.

By building relationships with practitioners and patients, the PRCs are finding ways to encourage lifesaving cancer screening.