



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

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New Report on Racial ‘Survival Gap’ for Colorectal Cancer Supports American College of Gastroenterology Call for African Americans to Begin Screening at Age 45 – Five Years Earlier Than Current Recommendations

Bethesda, MD, December 15, 2008 – A troubling gap in colorectal cancer survival between Caucasians and African Americans highlighted by the release today of a report by the American Cancer Society provides further and clear support for a call-to-action by the American College of Gastroenterology for healthcare providers to begin colorectal cancer screening in African Americans at age 45 rather than 50 years.

“The ACS data highlights the importance of the recommendation by the American College of Gastroenterology that African-Americans begin screening earlier at age 45,” explained Eamonn Quigley, M.D., FACG, ACG President.

“The high incidence of colorectal cancer in African Americans, combined with a greater prevalence of proximal or right-sided polyps and cancerous lesions in this population, points to colonoscopy is the preferred method of screening for colorectal cancer,” according to David A. Johnson, M.D., FACG, one of the co-authors of ACG’s colon cancer screening recommendations.

The American Cancer Society report highlights the role of late diagnosis in the disparity between blacks and whites, as well as the critical role of access to screening. According to the Cancer Society, African American patients are more likely than whites to be diagnosed when the disease is in its later stages.

The American College of Gastroenterology recommends colonoscopy as a “first line” screening procedure for colorectal cancer for African Americans rather than flexible sigmoidoscopy because of the high overall risk and as well as some evidence that African Americans have more right-sided cancers and polyps. The right side of the colon includes the cecum, ascending colon and proximal transverse colon and cannot be reached by flexible sigmoidoscopy.

The ACG recommendations for African Americans were published in the March 2005 issue of the *American Journal of Gastroenterology*.

Editors Note: Physician expert on colorectal cancer screening are available for interview by contacting Anne-Louise Oliphant at mediaonly@acg.gi.org or 301-263-9000.

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