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**MEDICAL EXPERTS URGE RENEWED EMPHASIS
ON LIFE-SAVING VALUE OF COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING**

One in three adults not up to date on vital test

Washington, DC (Feb. 27, 2014) – Colorectal cancer screening saves the lives of thousands of Americans every year, and yet [one out of every three eligible people](#) is not up to date on these vital health tests, a team of prominent gastroenterologists and public officials told members of Congress yesterday.

Dr. Howard K. Koh, assistant secretary for health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), told the audience that health officials are putting renewed emphasis on increasing colorectal cancer screening. In partnership with dozens of national non-profit, professional and government organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS plans to publicize the importance of screenings around the country at community health center sites.

“We have a tremendous opportunity before us over the next months and years,” said Koh. “We can envision a future where we eliminate colorectal cancer as a public health problem.”

Yesterday’s event was sponsored by the three gastroenterology societies, representing the majority of the country’s digestive health specialty physicians. The three organizations – the [American College of Gastroenterology](#) (ACG), [American Gastroenterological Association](#) (AGA), and [American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy](#) (ASGE) – have joined together to highlight the potential of colonoscopy to save lives as part of National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in March.

In addition to highlighting the most recent scientific data, the gastroenterologists demonstrated the colonoscopy technology and offered audience members the chance to perform the procedure on a silicone model.

“Right now, we have the medical expertise, the technology, and the dedication to prevent thousands of cases of cancer every year and, in the process, we can save countless lives and reduce Medicare costs of colorectal cancer care by \$15 billion annually,” Dr. Gregory G. Ginsberg, executive director of endoscopic services at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, told a Capitol Hill gathering of government officials, health professionals and patient advocacy groups.

The CDC estimates that 90 percent of all colon cancers occur after the age of 50. The United States Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening for those at average risk beginning at age 50. There are a variety of tests available to screen for colon cancer. Colonoscopy is the only test that allows physicians to examine the entire colon and find and remove polyps (growths) during the same procedure.

“Early detection of cancer by highly trained gastroenterologists who can identify and remove precancerous polyps is one of the great American public health success stories,” said Dr. David A. Greenwald, professor of clinical medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Montefiore Medical Center in New York. He emphasized that gastroenterologists’ expertise and training

help produce the optimum results, citing a [New England Journal of Medicine study](#) that found that doctors who spend more time on procedures are better at finding adenomas, growths in the colon with the potential to become cancer.

Rep. Donald Payne, Jr., who lost his father to colorectal cancer, emphasized the preventable nature of the disease.

“This is one of the most curable forms of cancer if detected early, so it doesn’t make sense to have so many people succumb to it,” Payne said. “There’s no real reason that my father shouldn’t still be the congressman for New Jersey’s 10th district.”

Rep. Joe Courtney thanked advocates for their dedication to increasing access to high-quality screening. He noted the momentum that the Affordable Care Act has provided in highlighting increased access to preventive services, including colorectal cancer screening.

“Everyone in this room knows someone who should be getting screened for colorectal cancer,” said Dr. Mark B. Pochapin, Sholtz-Leeds professor of gastroenterology, professor of medicine, and director of the Division of Gastroenterology at NYU Langone Medical Center. “It could be a spouse, a parent, a grandparent, a neighbor, or a friend. When it comes down to it, increased screening rates are about these people. That’s the true value of colonoscopy – its ability to save lives.”

Learn more at valueofcolonoscopy.org.

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About The Value of Colonoscopy

The Value of Colonoscopy: Saving Lives Through Expert Care is a partnership of the American College of Gastroenterology, American Gastroenterological Association and American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. The three gastroenterology societies have come together to highlight the value of colonoscopy in detecting and preventing colorectal cancer and the gastroenterologists who perform this life-saving procedure. The goal of the initiative is to ensure access to life-saving colorectal cancer screening procedures while working together to improve the quality and affordability of health care for all Americans.