

CANCER NOTES

"Joining forces for cancer control in Virginia"

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Special points of interest:

- *A Lion in the House* presents a feature on cancer survivorship.
- Statewide leadership summit meeting on colon cancer a success!
- VCR achieves data certification and will be published in national reports for first time!
- Colossal Colon comes to Fredericksburg
- The link between oral cancer and tobacco use
- Clients give EWL an "A" grade for services
- CPAC Advisory Board holds its first meeting

VIRGINIA COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CONTROL PROJECT



The Virginia Comprehensive Cancer Control Project (VA-CCC) coordinated with the Portsmouth Cancer Task Force to present a community-based cancer survivorship program on June 20th. The program was held at the Major Hillard Library in Portsmouth. Nearly 60 individuals attended. One-fourth of participants were cancer survivors ranging from seven to 93 years of age.

Featured speakers included Dr. Toney L. McNair of Maryview Medical Center, Ellie Duarte of Chesapeake General Hospital, Tracy Munoz of the American Cancer Society, Theresa Teekah of the Virginia Department of Health, and Dr. Sheila Ward of Norfolk State

University. The program featured clips of *"A Lion in the House,"* a documentary by Independent Lens, that looks at the journeys of five young people diagnosed with cancer and their families over a six year period. Audiences come face to face with the uncertainty of the entire cancer experience and its rippling effects on family, community, and professional caregivers. The two-part broadcast was aired nationally on PBS stations on June 21-22, 2006. A copy of the documentary is available for loan from the VA-CCC. For more information, visit <http://www.itvs.org/outreach/lioninthehouse>.

PREVENTING COLORECTAL CANCER IN VIRGINIA



On April 26th, the Virginia Department of Health Comprehensive Cancer Control Project, in collaboration with a statewide planning committee and with funding from the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation, held the **Dialogue for Action (DFA): Preventing Colorectal Cancer in Virginia Summit** at the Boar's Head Inn in Charlottesville, Virginia. Nearly 100 individuals representing public and private organizations, hospitals and medical practices, coalitions, and advocacy groups participated.

Laura C. Seeff, MD, of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Seeff's presentation on the power of partnership stressed the issue of collaborative efforts to reduce the burden of cancer and to enhance survivorship and quality of life for cancer patients. Plenary topics included an overview of the state of colorectal cancer in Virginia, patient navigation, colorectal cancer research, and examples of successful community-based awareness and screening projects. Other featured speakers were Jonathan Eisner,

MD, Andrew Wolf, MD, Resa Jones, MPH, PhD, Wendi El-Amin, MD, Ellie Duarte, and George Beller, MD, husband of the late State Senator Emily Couric and brother-in-law of Katie Couric, with an appearance by Polyp Man.

Besides creating a forum to receive current information about the state of colorectal cancer in Virginia, the summit featured participatory breakout sessions ("conversations") where attendees crafted recommendations to be implemented at the local/regional, state and legislative levels. Before the summit concluded, participants rank ordered recommendations using electronic keypads. The Virginia Cancer Plan Action Coalition (CPAC) has developed an ad hoc committee on colorectal cancer that will use these recommendations to create a strategic work plan on addressing colorectal cancer. For more information on the DFA summit, contact the Virginia Comprehensive Cancer Control Project at (804) 864-7877.

VCR ACHIEVES NAACCR CERTIFICATION

The Virginia Cancer Registry (VCR) achieved Silver Certification from the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR) for cancer incidence data collected in 2003. NAACCR is a national standards organization that annually reviews population-based central cancer registries for their ability to produce complete, accurate, and timely data and awards certification to registries that meet standards.

As a result, Virginia's data for the first time will be included in the 2006 edition of the NAACCR publication *Cancer in North America: 1999 - 2003* as well as the *United States Cancer Statistics*, which is an annual, joint publication of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC).

VCR manages the state cancer surveillance system in the Virginia Department of Health. VCR provides information on cancer incidence and trends in Virginia to cancer control and prevention programs, public health authorities, community groups, academic researchers, and citizens.

VCR recognizes the hard work and contributions made by hospitals, clinics, physicians, and laboratories statewide to achieving certification. VCR recognizes the critical roles of certified tumor registrars (CTRs) at reporting facilities who abstracted and submitted high quality data and of the VCR quality assurance staff who ensured the completeness and accuracy of received reports before data entry.



The Colossal Colon® exhibit at Mary Washington Hospital, Fredericksburg, Virginia, on March 7-11, 2006.

(Courtesy of Mary Washington Hospital Department of Education)

COLOSSAL COLON IN VIRGINIA

The Colossal Colon®, also known as “CoCo”, was visited by over 1,000 associates and community members of all ages at Mary Washington Hospital (MWH) in Fredericksburg, Virginia, this past March. The display, which is used as a tool to educate and promote the importance of colorectal cancer screening, was a collaborative effort between the Endoscopy Center of

MWH, MWH Cancer Committee, MWH Foundation, the American Cancer Society and the Virginia Department of Health's Comprehensive Cancer Control Project. The project, which was funded at over \$10,000, aligned with the mission of MWH and its partners, "to improve the health status of all members of [the] community".

SKIN CANCER AND SUN SAFETY

With summer here, it's time to take precautions against skin cancer. According to the Virginia Cancer Registry, approximately 1,080 Virginians are diagnosed each year with melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer. The American Cancer Society expects this figure to approach 1,730 new cases in 2006. Whites and males are more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma than either Blacks or females.

Risk of getting melanoma increases if you:

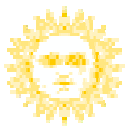
- Have light skin color, or have natural blonde or red hair,
- Have many moles or freckles,

- Spend a lot of time in the sun, or in tanning booths, and
- Have had sunburns or burn easily.

The best strategies to avoid skin cancer are to 1) cover up—apply sunscreen often, 2) wear protective clothing, including sunglasses, 3) avoid the sun between 10 am and 4 pm, and 4) examine your skin routinely for unusual moles or freckles. If you notice a suspicious mole that has grown in size, changed color, is irregular-shaped, or bleeds, oozes or itches, check with your doctor. Oftentimes, the doctor can remove the mole in the office before it becomes a bigger problem.

A third of Virginians said that they had at least one sunburn in the last twelve months, according to a 2003 state survey.

—Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System



ORAL CANCER AND TOBACCO USE

Oral cancer is a term for cancers of the oral cavity including the lip, tongue, salivary glands, gums, palate, floor of the mouth, and throat. This year, 30,000 Americans will be diagnosed with oral or throat cancer, and 8,000 deaths will occur.

According to the Virginia Cancer Registry, oral cancer ranked seventh of all newly reported cancers in Virginia in 2002. The National Cancer Institute ranks Virginia 22nd in oral cancer mortality among all states. Black males have the highest oral cancer incidence and mortality rates.

The most common risk factor for developing oral cancer is tobacco use. When tobacco use is combined with heavy alcohol use (more than 2 drinks per day), the risk of developing oral cancer is 15 times greater. Other risk factors include: being over age 45; being male; sun over-exposure to the lips; eating a diet low in fruits and vegetables; and the presence of certain viruses.

Signs of oral cancer include:

- A sore or lesion in the mouth that does not heal within two weeks,
- A lump or thickening in the cheek,
- A white or red patch on the gums,

- tongue, tonsil, or lining of the mouth,
 - Sore throat or constriction in the throat,
 - Difficulty chewing or swallowing,
 - Difficulty moving the jaw or tongue,
 - Numbness of the tongue or other area of the mouth,
 - Swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable.
- Prevention tips include:
- Do not smoke or use other tobacco,
 - Do not drink alcohol, or drink moderately,
 - Use lip balm with sunscreen (SPF 15),
 - Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

The American Cancer Society recommends that primary care doctors and dentists examine the mouth and throat as part of a routine cancer-related checkup. They have the opportunity to see abnormal tissue changes and to detect cancer at an early, curable stage. People, especially those at higher risk, should examine their throat and mouth for signs and symptoms using a mirror. For more information, contact the VDH Division of Dental Health at (804)864-7785.

At least 75 percent of those diagnosed with oral cancer are tobacco users. Tobacco use when combined with heavy alcohol drinking increases your risk of oral cancer even more.

EVERY WOMAN'S LIFE PROGRAM MEETS CLIENTS NEEDS



Requesting feedback from patients is one reliable approach to improving the quality of care to better meet their needs. The Every Woman's Life (EWL) program recently asked participants for feedback on the services they were receiving through the program. The EWL program, funded by the Virginia Department of Health, provides free mammograms and Pap tests to low income, uninsured, or underinsured women who are between the ages of 40-64.

Nearly 10 percent, or 600 women, of the statewide EWL caseload were randomly selected to complete the survey, which was administered in clinics by 23 provider sites across the state. EWL participants were asked to "grade" the continuum of program services, ranging from ease of enrollment to

follow up care. Surveys were designed as a traditional report card, using a scale of "A" through "D", corresponding to services rating "Great!" through "Poor".

Of the nine questions asked on the survey, all received an average grade of "A". Results showed that 98 percent of women surveyed said that they would recommend the program to a friend. One woman's comment echoes many other similar statements from patients stating, "I so appreciate the way I was treated and the quality of care I was given." The surveys were available in both English and Spanish. The EWL program will use the grades to structure future services in an ongoing effort to provide excellent patient care.

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**NEWS FROM THE CANCER PLAN
ACTION COALITION (CPAC)**



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This publication is available to state and local partners, health districts, and healthcare providers interested in preventing and controlling cancer in Virginia. If you have a story to share about your organization or community, please contact us.

The Virginia Cancer Advisory Board, a diverse group of physicians, other health care providers, health administrators, legislators, community leaders, and cancer survivors, held its first organizational meeting on June 14, 2006, at Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital in Chesterfield. The Board advises CPAC on the state cancer plan, seeks to identify and forge collaborative partnerships across the state, and advocates for cancer-related issues. Dr. Carol Friedman, Acting Chief of the Comprehensive Cancer Control Branch, CDC, was the keynote speaker for the meeting.

CPAC is currently developing a new state cancer plan using work groups and the Advisory Board. At the annual meeting on June 15 in Richmond, groups convened to review past efforts and seek input for the new plan. Dr. Friedman also addressed the group about state coalitions and state plans across the U.S.

Twelve members of CPAC attended the third phase of the Comprehensive Cancer Control Leadership Institute (CCCLI), held in Atlanta, in April. CCCLI is sponsored by the National Partnership for Comprehensive Cancer Control in collaboration with federal government organizations and national partners.

The Institute offered a series of trainings and focused on palliative care, clinical trials, tobacco control, survivorship, workforce and leadership development, and colorectal cancer screening. Six modules addressed cross-cutting issues such as disparities, sustaining partnerships, and data and evaluation.

The Institute provided participants from each state the opportunity to share successes and lessons learned, to look for ways to integrate approaches, to develop and practice leadership skills, and to take away tools and resources. For more information, contact CCC at (804) 864-7877.

