



**OLYMPUS**



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## **COLORECTAL CANCER EXPERTS HOLD CAPITOL HILL BRIEFING TO PROMOTE NATIONAL COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAM**

*March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month*

**March 30, 2011** – On Capitol Hill today, colorectal cancer experts and advocates will gather to promote the establishment of a national colorectal cancer screening program in an effort to save lives. In conjunction with National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), Fight Colorectal Cancer, Olympus, and the Prevent Cancer Foundation will hold a briefing on Capitol Hill with several high-profile speakers, including Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH, director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Tonya L. Adams, MD, a gastroenterologist and colorectal cancer survivor.

“Federal funding and support for colorectal cancer screening and prevention must remain a national policy priority to save lives and to combat this largely preventable disease,” said **Gregory G. Ginsberg, MD**, FASGE, president-elect, American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. “Prevention is the primary goal of colorectal cancer screening, which is accomplished by the identification and removal of polyps, growths in the colon, before they turn into cancer. Screening not only saves lives, but it saves money.”

The briefing sponsors are advocating for passage of legislation, the Colorectal Cancer Prevention, Early Detection, and Treatment Act, which would establish a national program under the CDC for colorectal cancer screenings and treatments. The program would target the pre-Medicare population – those 50-64 years of age – who are considered at high-risk for colorectal cancer. The program would give priority to low-income, uninsured and underinsured individuals who do not otherwise have coverage for colorectal cancer screening, diagnostic follow up, and/or treatment. The legislation is sponsored in the Senate by Sens. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and in the House by Reps. Kay Granger (R-TX) and Jim McGovern (D-MA).

“While the Affordable Care Act will lower the cost of preventive services like colonoscopies for many Americans, the law will not do anything to increase awareness about the importance of early detection and screening. Today, even among those with health insurance, screening rates for colorectal cancer are much too low – less than half of those who should be screened get screened,” said **Nancy Roach**, chair of Fight Colorectal Cancer’s board of directors. “When the national breast and cervical cancer screening program was enacted in the mid-80s, the screening rate for breast cancer was around 29 percent. Today, that rate is close to 80 percent. It is time we made the same headway in the fight against colorectal cancer and enacted a national screening and treatment program for colorectal cancer.”

“Olympus has long been a champion of all efforts to fight colorectal cancer,” said Olympus Corporation of the Americas President and CEO, **F. Mark Gumz**. “Prevention is key for this disease and we’re heartened that our legislators have recognized this important fact and taken bold steps to ensure all Americans can get screened.”

The legislation would expand upon an existing CDC program, the Colorectal Cancer Control Program, which currently provides education and screening programs in 25 states and four tribes. Although the use of colorectal cancer screening has been shown to reduce the incidence of, and deaths from, this disease, utilization rates still lag behind other well accepted preventive services. The CDC reports that if all precancerous polyps were identified and removed before becoming cancerous, estimates show that the number of new colorectal cancer cases could be reduced by 76 to 90 percent and deaths could be reduced by 70 to 90 percent.

“Colon cancer has a five-year survival rate of over 90 percent when diagnosed early, but a survival rate of only 11 percent when diagnosed late,” said **Christopher W. Hansen**, president of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). “Colon cancer screening has been proven to prevent cancer through the detection and removal of premalignant polyps. Less than 20 percent of the uninsured have been properly screened for colorectal cancer, which means that too many Americans are going without this lifesaving screening because they cannot afford it. This legislation will help stop a cancer that can be prevented in many cases and help to save lives, prevent suffering, and reduce the cost burden of colon cancer on our country.”

"Educating our policymakers about colorectal cancer and the effectiveness of screening is a high priority," said **Lisa Hughes**, director of policy and advocacy for the Prevent Cancer Foundation. "Educational efforts, like the Prevent Cancer Super Colon™ exhibit and Congressional briefing, can have a significant impact on the development of legislation and policy that improves access to screening for all individuals."

Following the briefing, guests will meet for a reception featuring the Prevent Cancer Foundation’s Super Colon™ exhibit, an 8-foot tall, 20-foot long replica of the human colon that is an interactive educational tool reminding Americans that colorectal cancer is preventable and beatable through proper screening.

### **About Colorectal Cancer**

A report released by leading cancer groups in 2009 showed that from 1975 to 2000, colorectal cancer incidence rates dropped 22 percent and death rates dropped 26 percent. The decline reflects the impact of increased colorectal cancer screening, changes in lifestyle and diet, and improved treatments. Unfortunately, approximately 50,000 people still die each year from colorectal cancer in the U.S. In some ethnic populations and underserved communities, colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates remain disproportionately higher than in white Americans. Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in both men and women in the United States, excluding skin cancers, and is the third-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in both men and women. Based on scientific evidence, there is widespread agreement that regular screening can help prevent colorectal cancer.

ASGE screening guidelines recommend that, beginning at age 50, asymptomatic men and women at average risk for developing colorectal cancer should have a colonoscopy every 10 years. People with risk factors, such as a family history of colorectal cancer, should begin screening at an earlier age. Patients are advised to discuss their risk factors with their physician to determine when to begin routine colorectal cancer screening and how often they should be screened. Screening for colorectal cancer is especially important because colorectal cancer is often present in people without symptoms. People should speak to their physicians about an appropriate screening schedule and which screening method is best for them.

For more information about colorectal cancer screening or to find a qualified physician, visit ASGE's colorectal cancer awareness website at [www.screen4coloncancer.org](http://www.screen4coloncancer.org). To get involved in colorectal cancer advocacy and research, log on to the Fight Colorectal Cancer website at [www.FightColorectalCancer.org](http://www.FightColorectalCancer.org).

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### **About American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)**

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit [www.acscan.org](http://www.acscan.org).

### **About the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy**

Since its founding in 1941, the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) has been dedicated to advancing patient care and digestive health by promoting excellence in gastrointestinal endoscopy. ASGE, with nearly 12,000 members worldwide, promotes the highest standards for endoscopic training and practice, fosters endoscopic research, recognizes distinguished contributions to endoscopy, and is the foremost resource for endoscopic education. Visit [www.asge.org](http://www.asge.org) and [www.screen4coloncancer.org](http://www.screen4coloncancer.org) for more information and to find a qualified doctor in your area.

### **About Fight Colorectal Cancer**

Fight Colorectal Cancer (formerly the C3: Colorectal Cancer Coalition) is the leading colorectal cancer advocacy organization in Washington, DC and demands a cure for the second leading cancer killer in the United States. In addition to our advocacy work, we offer support for patients, family members, and caregivers and serve as a resource for colorectal cancer advocates, policymakers, medical professionals, and healthcare providers. We also do everything we can to increase and improve research – at all stages of development and for all stages of cancer. Find out how you can get involved at [FightColorectalCancer.org](http://FightColorectalCancer.org).

### **About Olympus**

Olympus is a precision technology leader, designing and delivering innovative solutions in its core business areas: Medical and Surgical Products, Life Science Imaging Systems, Industrial Testing and Measurement Instruments and Cameras and Audio Products.

Olympus' Medical Systems Group is a leader in the advancement of less invasive procedures. Olympus provides knowledge and solutions in the areas of advanced diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopy, early-stage cancer evaluation and treatment and innovative, less invasive surgical procedures. Olympus is continually dedicated to elevating standards of patient care to deliver earlier detection, faster and better treatment, improved outcomes and enhanced quality of life. For more information, visit [www.olympusamerica.com](http://www.olympusamerica.com).

### **About the Prevent Cancer Foundation**

Our mission is to advocate and support the prevention and early detection of cancer through research, education and community outreach to all populations, including children and the underserved. We envision a future where cancer incidence and mortality will be significantly reduced through preventive measures. We carry out our mission by funding research that helps us better understand how to prevent cancer, by educating people about how they can prevent cancer, and by reaching out to communities across the country through our resources, events and partnerships with other organizations.

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