

## Hospital Happenings

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She didn't want a colonoscopy. After all, she was only 50 years-old and felt fine. Why would her doctor want her to do such a procedure? Those things are awful, aren't they? Reluctantly, Susan came to my office to get it scheduled.

In the United States, colon cancer is diagnosed in 140,000 persons each year. Of those, 40,000 will die from the disease. Many will undergo chemotherapy for advanced disease and not tolerated by everyone. Many patients present to their doctor or an emergency room with rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, or bowel obstruction. But by then, it's too late! The best hope at long-term survival is early detection by colonoscopy. Recent improvements have made them much easier.

**But I hate bowel preps!** Bowel preps are much easier than they used to be. No longer is it required to drink a gallon of salt water, such as Go-Lytely (whoever went "Lytely" anyway?). Commercially available bowel preps come in a smaller volume and are much more palatable. The prep is taken in the privacy of your home the day before your procedure.

**The procedure is painful!** The anesthetic has improved as well. These procedures used to be done in an office where the patient was able to "appreciate" the entire procedure. Now, you can be sedated with IV medication so that you are not awake or aware of any part of the procedure. Waking up is easy. Most patients leave within 30 minutes of completion of the colonoscopy with minimal side effects.

**My insurance won't pay for it!** Insurance companies, including Medicare, are now paying for screening colonoscopies. If you have symptoms related to your intestines, insurance is even more likely to cover the procedure. The Colorectal Cancer Screening Program (CCSP) might cover the cost if you don't have insurance.

Fortunately for Susan, she went through with her colonoscopy. She had a colon cancer in its early stages. Her surgery was done with a laparoscope so that her largest incision was less than two inches long! She went home after only one night in the hospital. She didn't need chemo and has returned to a full life.

For questions, Dr. Sawyer can be reached at [codduts@hughes.net](mailto:codduts@hughes.net).

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