



Dear Colleague,

With the help of clinicians such as you, Kentucky made significant progress in increasing screening and reducing colon cancer incidence and mortality by 23% from 2001 to 2011 (Kentucky Cancer Registry).

But a *large* number of people are still *not* getting screened--in fact, more than one-third of Americans aged 50-75 were not up to date, including nearly 28% who'd *never* been screened (CDC 2012 Behavioral Risk Survey). Colon cancer continues to be the *second leading cause of cancer deaths* for both men and women combined in Kentucky. Over *800 Kentuckians* die from colon cancer each year; 60% of that number--480 deaths--could be *prevented* with regular screenings.

Across the United States, a new **combined screening strategy** of colonoscopy *OR* an annual fecal immunochemical test (FIT) is expanding the accessibility and convenience of colon cancer screening. Research has shown that this new improved test--**FIT**--is more effective at detecting colon cancer and easier to use than the old fecal occult blood test (FOBT). When used annually, FIT testing has proven to be nearly as effective as colonoscopy at reducing mortality.

For patients who *cannot* or *will not* utilize colonoscopy, FIT testing provides an excellent option. Research studies found that the diagnostic accuracy of FITs for colorectal cancer in asymptomatic, average-risk adults detected 79% of colon tumors and were effective in ruling out cancer. Other study results reported FIT had an 81% sensitivity for detection of colorectal cancer and 29% sensitivity for detecting advanced colorectal adenomas in average risk adults. Studies also found patients were more likely to agree to be screened using FIT compared to colonoscopy.

More doctors are using FITs because they are effective at identifying cancer and easier for people to use. Unlike the older tests, FITs use one sample and do not require any diet or medication restrictions.

Advantages of FIT:

- It is effective in identifying large polyps and colon cancer
- It is easy and inexpensive to use as an annual screening
- With regular screening there is time to identify cancer in early stages
- It is easier to use than previous FOBT tests. FIT does NOT have any diet or medication restrictions
- There is scientific evidence to support use of FIT

The Kentucky Colon Cancer Screening Program (KCCSP), based at your local health department, is offering free colon cancer screening to eligible, uninsured, low income people. KCCSP not only enrolls patients in the screening program, but offers patient navigators who follow up to provide assistance and promote compliance.

KCCSP uses a combination of FITs and colonoscopies, a model that has effectively increased colon cancer screening in other states and countries. High risk patients are immediately referred for colonoscopy; patients at average risk receive an annual FIT test, and referred for colonoscopy if the FIT is positive.

Please join me in working toward increasing colon cancer screening in your practice by utilizing *all* the screening resources available to our patients--colonoscopy, FIT testing and referral of low income, uninsured patients to the Kentucky Colon Cancer Screening Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Whitney Jones", written in a cursive style.

Whitney Jones, MD