

VIEWPOINTS

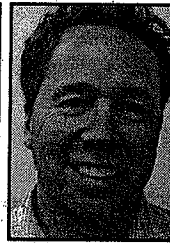
Clatsop County: A leader for the state

It was just about a year ago that the campaign to raise awareness about the need to be screened for colorectal cancer was piloted here in Clatsop County. At the time, I could hardly say, colorectal cancer or colonoscopy without getting a little embarrassed.

Getting involved in the campaign helped normalize the procedure for me and hopefully for many others as well. You might remember the billboard by the junction to Hwy. 26, seeing an ad in the newspaper, hearing an ad on the radio or receiving information from your employer, doctor, or business group.

The Oregon Health Authority, which received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to increase screening rates among Oregonians chose Clatsop County for the pilot campaign for two main reasons.

First, we have higher than normal



**GUEST
COLUMN**

STEVEN BLAKESLEY

rates of colorectal cancer and lower than normal rates of screening compared to Oregon averages. Second, due to preliminary work by Nancy Magathan with Columbia Memorial Hospital's Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Program, many of the key elements necessary to test and roll out the pilot were already in place.

So how did we do? As a county we put on an all-star performance. The campaign was successful on several fronts:

- Community partners and influencers were actively engaged

- Already screened community members became messengers to their unscreened peers

- Unscreened residents got screened and cancer was prevented. In fact, Dr. Truman Sasaki at Columbia Memorial Hospital performed 71 additional colonoscopies (220 total) during the pilot period compared to the same time frame the year before. One cancer was caught early, allowing the patient to begin treatment immediately.

Perhaps our greatest achievement was that due to our great efforts, and real results and impact, the Oregon Health Authority is using the model that we

developed here in Clatsop County to roll out to Oregonians across the state. In addition to working to increase screening among all Oregonians, they are working with partners in African American and Native American communities where there is a higher rate of colorectal cancer diagnoses and deaths, and implementing a mini campaign in Eastern Oregon.

So, great job Clatsop County. But our work isn't done yet. We need to continue to encourage men and woman over 50 years of age to get screened. Colorectal cancer is the second most deadly form of cancer, but also one of the most treatable if caught early.

We have some great doctors here on the coast that can help us push those screening rates up and get those rates of colorectal cancer down.

For more information about screening, or to read Oregonians' stories about the cancer and screening, and to share yours, visit www.TheCancerYouCanPrevent.org.

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