

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Seven Hills, OH – With the observance of National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in March, Ohio KePRO encourages healthcare providers and Medicare beneficiaries to be mindful of the dangers of colorectal cancer, and the importance of regular screenings.

Colorectal cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in the U.S. It affects men and women in roughly equal numbers, and more than 90 percent of those diagnosed are aged 50 or older. Although the disease strikes as many as 145,000 Americans each year and is responsible for over 50,000 deaths annually, † fewer than half of Americans have any colorectal cancer testing.‡ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 60 percent of these deaths could be prevented if everyone aged 50 and older obtained the appropriate screenings.\*

Below are some facts about colorectal cancer, taken from the most recent available information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: †

- 145,083 Americans were diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2004, including 6,397 Ohioans.
- 53,580 men and women died of colorectal cancer in the U.S. in 2004, including 2,479 in Ohio.
- Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of death among men in the U.S., behind prostate cancer and lung and bronchus cancer.
- Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of death among women in the U.S., behind breast cancer and lung and bronchus cancer.

Early colorectal cancer usually has no symptoms, so early testing is crucial. Colorectal cancer screenings have proven to be highly effective in early detection and prevention. They allow more colorectal cancers to be found earlier, when the disease is easier to cure. Colorectal cancer screenings are recommended annually for men and women aged 50-75; for those aged 76-85, colorectal cancer screening may be indicated on an individualized basis. Screening is not recommended for individuals aged 86 and older.§ Individuals should consult their doctors to determine the most appropriate screening schedule for their level of risk.

As Ohio's Medicare Quality Improvement Organization, Ohio KePRO offers tools and resources for Medicare beneficiaries and healthcare providers in taking preventive measures against breast cancer and colorectal cancer at [www.ohiokepro.com](http://www.ohiokepro.com).

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### About Ohio KePRO

Ohio KePRO, the Quality Improvement Organization for Medicare in Ohio, is committed to continuous quality improvement in healthcare through the provision of innovative products and services provided at no charge to healthcare providers and Ohio's 1.8 million Medicare beneficiaries. Visit Ohio KePRO's Web site at [www.ohiokepro.com](http://www.ohiokepro.com) for more information. Media inquiries can also be submitted online at [www.ohiokepro.com/media.asp/](http://www.ohiokepro.com/media.asp/).

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†U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. *United States Cancer Statistics: 1999–2004 Incidence and Mortality Web-based Report*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; 2007. Available at [www.cdc.gov/uscs](http://www.cdc.gov/uscs). Accessed January 19, 2009.

‡The American Cancer Society. The American Cancer Society Web site. Available at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). Accessed January 19, 2009.

\*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Colorectal (Colon) Cancer. Available at [www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic\\_info/](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/). Accessed January 19, 2009.

§ U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Screening for Colorectal Cancer: U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. AHRQ Publication 08-05124-EF-3, October 2008. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. Available at [www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstf08/colocancer/colors.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstf08/colocancer/colors.htm). Accessed February 26, 2009.

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