

**Invitation to bowel cancer screening programs**

**March's Bowel Cancer Awareness Month also marks the start of a model project of the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) to improve early bowel cancer detection. Information on this project and on all other questions about bowel cancer will be provided by the Cancer Information Service (Krebsinformationsdienst) on a separate telephone line during the month of March.**

Bowel (colorectal) cancer develops slowly. Precancerous stages often take many years to develop into a dangerous carcinoma. They are well detectable by colonoscopy and can even be removed during the same examination. Therefore, possibilities of preventing colorectal cancer by consistent early detection measures are much better than for other types of cancer. Screening colonoscopy has been part of the statutory early cancer detection program in Germany since 2002; a test for occult blood in the stool has even been offered by statutory health insurances since 1977.

"If more people participated in such screening examinations, a considerable number of colorectal cancer cases could be prevented each year in Germany," says Professor Dr. Hermann Brenner of the German Cancer Research Center. With the aim of increasing compliance rates with screening programs, the DKFZ epidemiologist will shortly launch a model project in collaboration with Saarland Cancer Register. While previous early detection programs have relied solely on people's own initiative to take part in screening, this research project will test an approach called organized screening. The register is used for randomly selecting citizens who will be sent a personal invitation by mail to one of the two screening examinations. Approximately 30,000 persons living in the State of Saarland born 1962 to 1957 will receive such an invitation letter.

The project is intended to answer various questions: To what extent can participation rates in both procedures be increased? Do repeated invitations lead to further increases? Is it useful to include test materials for the stool examination in the letters? How often is a positive test for blood in the stool followed by a colonoscopy examination?

"Of course, we also need to determine the cost-effectiveness of invitation-based screening, that is to compare the costs to the expected long-term decrease in the number of colorectal cancer cases. It is therefore important to develop a possibly simple organizational approach," said Hermann Brenner. "If the project is successful – and that's what we expect –, it could serve as a model for introducing invitation-based bowel cancer screening throughout Germany." Following the success of invitation-based screening programs in other countries, Germany relied on this concept from the very start when introducing mammography screening for early breast cancer detection by inviting women by mail to participate.

The project will be funded as part of the National Cancer Plan by the German Health Ministry for a period of three years.

The Cancer Information Service (Krebsinformationsdienst, KID) of the German Cancer Research Center answers questions about cancer from patients, their families and interested members of the public. The telephone service is available daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the toll-free number 0800-420 30 40 or can be reached via e-mail at [krebsinformationsdienst@dkfz.de](mailto:krebsinformationsdienst@dkfz.de). On its website, at [www.krebsinformationsdienst.de](http://www.krebsinformationsdienst.de), the service additionally provides plenty of information on the topic of cancer.

Throughout March's Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, **an additional line on early bowel cancer detection** will be available at the same toll-free number on workdays from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. On this line, staff members of the Cancer Information Service will provide information about the various possibilities of prevention and early detection of bowel (colorectal) cancer as well as about the disease and treatment possibilities.

Cancer information has *one* number:  
(daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.)

0800 420 30 40

Cancer information via e-mail:

[krebsinformationsdienst@dkfz.de](mailto:krebsinformationsdienst@dkfz.de)

Cancer information on the Internet:

[www.krebsinformationsdienst.de](http://www.krebsinformationsdienst.de)

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) with its more than 2,500 employees is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany. At DKFZ, more than 1,000 scientists investigate how cancer develops, identify cancer risk factors and endeavor to find new strategies to prevent people from getting cancer. They develop novel approaches to make tumor diagnosis more precise and treatment of cancer patients more successful. Jointly with Heidelberg University Hospital, DKFZ has established the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg where promising approaches from cancer research are translated into the clinic. The staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) offers information about the widespread disease of cancer for patients, their families, and the general public. The center is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers. Ninety percent of its funding comes from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the remaining ten percent from the State of Baden-Württemberg.

Dr. Stefanie Seltmann  
Head of Press and Public Relations  
German Cancer Research Center  
Im Neuenheimer Feld 280  
D-69120 Heidelberg  
T: +49 6221 42 2854  
F: +49 6221 42 2968  
[presse@dkfz.de](mailto:presse@dkfz.de)