The Crippling Truth: Colon Cancer

Introduction

Colon cancer is one of the most commonly known cancers affecting people worldwide. Similar to other cancers, it can cause health defects in both men and women. As published from the National Cancer Institute, this form of cancer grows and affects the longest portion of the large intestine, the colon.[1] (see **Figure 1**).

Generally speaking, most cancers of the colon are known as adenocarcinomas, which begin in the cells that make and release mucus. This can harshly disrupt the abdominal organs, specifically affecting the wall linings of the stomach and gastrointestinal functions.[1] Adenocarcinoma can begin as a small growth known as a polyp and can eventually form into a cancerous cell on the walls of the colon; then digging its way into the blood and/or lymph vessels.[2]

Colon cancer has been found in those who either do suffer from or have had bouts with inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease and/or ulcerative colitis disease.[3] All of these abdominal disruptions are incredibly painful after inflaming, irritating and then damaging the intestines at that site. These lesions in the colon could be caused from drug and alcohol use, obesity, age and/or cigarette smoking.

Screening and Detection

There are many options that patients are able to choose from when getting screening done to detect for cancer. These options are available for other cancer, not only that which effects the colon and intestines. Colonoscopies are found to be very successful, something a lot of people choose to do nationwide.[4] Other available options are blood tests, and radiology tests such as computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) scans (see **Figure 2**).

These different modalities are able to detect cancerous findings within the human body. Generally speaking, CT is good in showing abnormal findings as well as detecting polyps and tumors.[6] CT also helps with the staging, specificity and accuracy of the findings.[7] MRI is used in detecting metastases that are small within the abdomen.[8] Lastly, PET scanning is used in finding tumors and the extent to which the cancer has spread.[9]

Colon Cancer Model

Genetic Make Up	Contributing Factors	Clinical Studies	Treatments
- Crohn's Disease	- Cigarette Smoking	- Computed Tomography	- Chemo-therapy
- Ulcerative	- Drug Use	- Magnetic Resonance Imaging	- Radiation Therapy
- Colitis	- Excessive Alcohol Consumption	- Positron Emission Tomography	- Surgery (variety)
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease	- Obesity	- Colonoscopy	
- Family History	- Poor Diet	- Blood Test	
	- Sedentary Lifestyle		

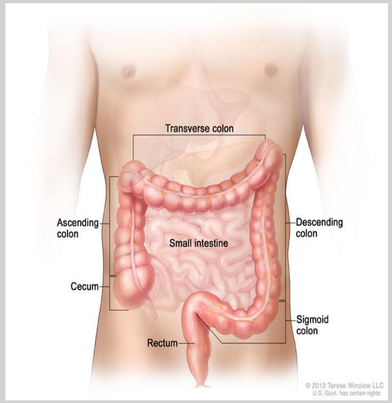

Figure 1. This image helps you visualize some of the intestines and colon in the human body**.** You are able to see where colon cancer may be found.[1]

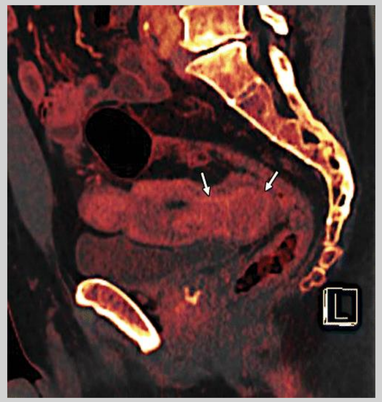

Figure 2. CT scan helps find that a patient has colorectal cancer. Arrows in abdominal cavity indicating that placement of the cancerous mass.[5]

Staging and Treatment

Staging of cancer can vary, and to determine staging, they look at each patient's polyp/tumor size, lymph nodes and how much the cancer has spread throughout the body; which is what makes up the scoring to stage someone.[10]

Treatment options are chemotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery; all depending upon the type/severity of cancer. Chemotherapy involves drugs injected into the body by pill or intravenously.[11] Radiation therapy is when high energy photons penetrate the skin and attack the cancerous area.[11] The last option being surgery. For colon cancer they usually remove the affected area, then fuse the two healthy ends of the colon together to function properly.[11]

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