

Colorectal Cancer Screening

A Racial Inequity We Need to Address

Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death for men and women in the United States. In Monroe County, the rate of colorectal cancer deaths is nearly 30% higher among Black adults compared to white adults. Timely screening helps to prevent and treat colorectal cancer, so URMCM is working to close the racial gap.

Starting Point

Doctors recommend that adults ages 45 to 75 get screened periodically for colorectal cancer, starting at younger ages if they have a family history of colorectal cancer or certain medical conditions. These guidelines apply to everyone, but colorectal cancer screening is particularly important for Black families in our region, where new diagnoses of colorectal cancer are 18% more common among Black adults than white adults. In Monroe County, there are 22.5 colorectal cancer deaths per 100,000 Black men compared to 15.9 colorectal cancer deaths per 100,000 for white men.

Answering the Community's Call BarberED, BeautiED, Then Screened.



In 2021, Wilhelmina Sizer, a doctorate nurse practitioner student with URMCM's Gastroenterology Department, noticed lower rates of colorectal cancer screenings among the Black community. Barbers have a long history of being involved with the health of their community, so she piloted a program with the Rochester

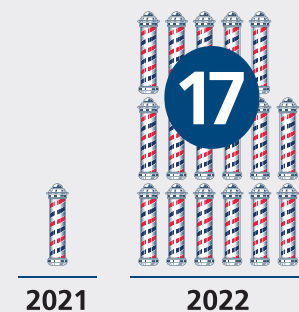
United Professional Barbers and Cosmetologists Association (UPBCA). The goal is to link health care providers with leading barbers and stylists who serve the Black community and are invested in decreasing this disparity. Janice Cheong, MD—a gastroenterologist actively involved in the program, which is now called "BarberED, BeautiED, then Screened"—and the team have trained 37 barbers/stylists from 17 shops in eight of the poorest zip codes in Rochester since 2021, and the program continues to grow.

UPBCA Founder Willie Lightfoot knows firsthand the devastation cancer can cause, having lost his father to stomach cancer.

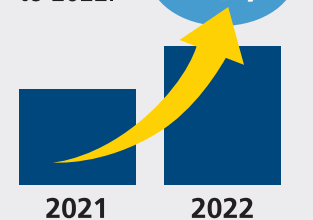


In his roles as pastor, barbershop owner, city leader and community member, he is spreading the word, "My job is to say, 'I was able to do it and was successful at it. You can, too,'" he says. "You can take the reins, get behind the wheel and drive your health care when it comes to this. Be preventive, and if there's something there, you can take control to have that removed. And that's empowering."

The program has grown from one barbershop in 2021 to 17 barbershops and salons in 2022.



Colorectal cancer screenings among Black individuals at URMCM locations increased by 45 percent from 2021 to 2022.



"Colorectal cancer screening is vital because it not only helps find cancers earlier, but undergoing screening can prevent cancer from ever developing," says Cheong. "Disparity exists in colorectal cancer screening, and we are working with the community to

open the door to access through education because everyone deserves access to screening."

Spotlight: Primary Care Launches Comprehensive Campaign to Boost Colorectal Cancer Screening

URMC's Primary Care Network team is making significant strides in enhancing cancer screening rates, with nearly 78% of patients now up to date with colorectal cancer screening. This achievement is the result of a coordinated network-wide initiative aimed at making screenings more accessible and efficient.

The Primary Care Network is leveraging data analytics to identify patients who are overdue for screenings and prioritizing outreach efforts. This data-driven approach ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and that high-risk populations receive the attention they need.

To tackle long wait times for colonoscopies, patients at low risk are offered a stool test to detect blood in the stool, an early indicator of colorectal cancer. These kits are conveniently mailed to patients' homes or provided during office visits. Since last summer, thousands of screening tests have been sent to patients throughout the network.

"The UR Primary Care Network has a robust population health program that supports cancer screening, allowing us to exceed national screening rate averages," said Robert Fortuna, MD, MPH. "We are also addressing disparities in colorectal cancer screening within our region by implementing targeted outreach and dedicating resources to reach underserved populations."



What's Next: Colon Cancer Can Be Prevented, So Get Screened If You're Eligible

New York state has a goal of 80% of eligible people in all communities receiving a colorectal cancer screening. Let's work together to get there!

- Visit your local barber or beautician to learn more about colon cancer screenings and how to schedule an appointment.

- Call your Primary Care provider to request a stool test, or a colonoscopy if you are at high risk for colorectal cancer and are 45 or older. A blood test may soon become an option to test for similar markers as the stool test, but in the meantime check in with your PCP.
- No Health Insurance? No problem! The [Cancer Services Program of the Finger Lakes](#) offers free screenings for Colorectal Cancer. Call (585) 224-3070 if you are in Monroe County or 1-877-803-8070 from outside.

Colorectal Cancer Education On the Road



Wilmot Cancer Institute's [Community Outreach and Engagement](#) team has been out and about across the region with an inflatable colon to raise awareness of colorectal cancer and the importance of getting screened.

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About Health Equity Updates

Faculty and staff members across URMC are working to reduce health inequities through research, education, and improved access to care. These updates provide snapshots of specific challenges being addressed and progress being made with community partners toward our ultimate goal of equal life expectancy for all.