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State Health Division Awarded \$600,000 to fight colorectal cancer

(Carson City, NV) — The Nevada State Health Division has been awarded a five-year, \$600,000 federal grant to strengthen the state's fight against colorectal cancer by enhancing screening programs, Health Division Administrator Richard Whitley announced today.

"We know that there are many Nevadans who are uninsured and face various other barriers to preventive care," Whitley said. "Our goal is to provide this important, often lifesaving screening to those that most likely need it."

Two-thirds of the grant will fund strategies to increase screening in people aged 50 and older, which is the population most at risk of colorectal cancer. The remaining funds will be used to target screening for uninsured and minority populations.

Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cancer killer in the United States, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At least 60 percent of those deaths could be avoided if everyone aged 50 and over had regular screening tests.

According to a CDC survey from 2008, only 55.7 percent of Nevadans aged 50 and over had received a flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy at least once in their lifetimes. The national average is 61.8 percent.

The grant is through the CDC's Colorectal Cancer Control Program and was originally awarded in 2009 but was not funded until this year. The state's project will roll out across Nevada over five years, starting in the Reno-Carson City area in 2011, expanding throughout northern Nevada in 2012, all of rural Nevada in 2013 and the entire state in 2014 and 2015.

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