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Media Release

For immediate release

COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING MAKES THE BEST OF A STICKY SITUATION

(March 9, 2011 Thunder Bay, ON) – We've all been there, sticky situations happen all the time - when you put your foot in your mouth, or when you find yourself in the wrong place at the wrong time, or when you act before thinking.

A new campaign presented by Regional Cancer Care Northwest, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation's Northern Cancer Fund and RBC Royal Bank, pokes fun at a different kind of sticky situation: The kind that encourages people aged 50 and over to complete a simple, yet (let's face it) unpleasant test in the privacy of their own bathrooms.

"We're taking a light-hearted approach to colorectal cancer screening," says Alison McMullen, Director of preventive oncology at Regional Cancer Care Northwest at Thunder Bay Regional Health sciences Centre. "Ontario has one of the highest rates of colorectal cancer in the world. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of Ontario cancer deaths after lung cancer, and the third most common cancer diagnosed."

Awareness is working. Fecal occult blood test (FOBT) screening rates are steadily rising. An important part of any screening program is to ensure there is the ability to follow up an abnormal result with timely diagnostic testing. "The direct referral program at our Health Sciences Centre has significantly improved the wait times for adults aged 50 and older who have an abnormal FOBT test or have a family history," McMullen adds. In March 2010, less than 50% of those referred with a positive FOBT received a follow-up colonoscopy within 8 weeks (Cancer Care Ontario's provincial performance target). By December 2010, the number climbed to 86%.

That's precisely why the Sticky Situation campaign is so important. Glenn Craig, President & CEO of the Health Sciences Foundation, says providing funding to increase cancer screening awareness in our community is a priority. "As they say, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'. We know campaigns like this one help reduce deaths from colorectal cancer. That's the best kind of return on investment for those who donate to our Northern Cancer Fund."

One such donor is RBC Royal Bank. For the past four years, RBC Royal Bank has sponsored the local colorectal cancer awareness campaigns. "We recognize there is a need in our community to address high rates of colorectal cancer, and we are proud to contribute both financially and through the dedication of our staff by helping spread the message that screening saves lives," says Murray Walberg, Regional Vice President, RBC Royal Bank.





The Sticky Situation campaign will include billboards, posters and advertisements to help remind men and women aged 50 and over to talk with their healthcare provider about colorectal cancer screening. A unique element of this year's campaign – and one that will encourage people to make the best of a sticky situation – is the distribution of a larger-than-life version of the FOBT test stick. Watch for it in your mailbox!

The FOBT is the test that can save your life. So what's big deal if you have to poke your poop with a little stick ... it's worth it in the end! Colorectal cancer is preventable, treatable and beatable.

The FOBT can detect the presence of trace amounts of blood in your stool. A positive test result doesn't necessarily mean that you have colorectal cancer but does require a follow-up colonoscopy to find out if you do. Approximately 10% of people with a positive FOBT are found to have cancer during a follow-up colonoscopy. It is recommended that people aged 50 and older be screened with an FOBT once every two years.

Dr. Heather McLean is a local family physician and the primary care lead for the Regional Cancer Care Northwest. She says less than 30% of the eligible population are being screened regularly for colorectal cancer. "Participation rates have been steadily increasing across the province, and here in Northwestern Ontario, where we have a higher risk of colorectal cancer due to our lifestyle, including higher rates of smoking and obesity, we must stay on course to reach people not receiving regular screening," she explains.

"While you think about how you will use your stick, remember that using the real version could save your life, even when a person feels perfectly well and is not experiencing any symptoms," reinforces McLean. "It's really easy to take the first step, just talk to your healthcare provider about the FOBT. If you don't have a doctor or nurse practitioner to talk to, you can get a kit through Telehealth or a participating pharmacy. Colorectal cancer is 90 per cent curable if detected early, and it is a simple, take home test."

For more information on colorectal cancer and the FOBT kit, please visit Ontario.ca/ColonCancerCheck

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