

Personal story from a colon cancer survivor



*Jay Mansbach,
husband, father, businessman and colon cancer survivor*

“Being diagnosed with colon cancer was a bit of a surprise to me considering the fact that I thought I had kept up with the current information, at that time, on screening.

In the late spring of 1994, during a discussion with a pathologist who I had met, I mentioned that my father died at 72 from colon cancer. I said that I was taking the normal precautions of having yearly stool hemocult tests, as well as blood and urine tests in my second job as a paramedic and Firefighter Lieutenant in charge of the Emergency Medical Services operation in our community volunteer fire department.

He asked if I had ever had a colonoscopy. I replied that I was planning to have one at age 50, as recommended for everyone in the current literature that I had read at the time. He said that some of the current medical journals noted that many cancers, including colon cancer, move forward in future generations. In my case, this turned out to be true. My father was diagnosed at age 71 and succumbed to the disease at 72. Based on this new information, I decided to get a complete physical, including a colonoscopy, which found a cancerous lesion. I was 46.

Two weeks later thanks to a pathologist’s prompt and accurate diagnosis, I had surgery followed by three weeks of radiation and nine months of chemotherapy. Obviously, it worked, because I am still here today living a great life 13 years later.

Having lived through this experience, I strongly recommend that all people have regular colon (and other appropriate) cancer screening tests, especially if they

have a genetic predisposition for the disease in their family history. If I had the colonoscopy just a little earlier, I could have avoided the extended battle with colon cancer. Because of the considerate pathologist who convinced me to be tested, all of my family, relatives and friends have been much more vigilant.”