

MEDIA RELEASE



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More rural Australians urged to take home bowel cancer test

Rural doctors are urging more rural Australians to undertake a painless, at-home bowel cancer test to help reduce deaths by cancer.

The call follows recent Cancer Council research which shows that although more than 80% of people aged 50 and over are aware of the simple, at-home screening test for bowel cancer, less than half of those aware of the faecal occult blood test (FOBT) have actually done the test.

Dr Peter Rischbieth, Vice President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), said the research again highlights the importance of early testing.

“The Cancer Council’s figures on death rates from bowel cancer continue to be really worrying—it is the nation’s second biggest cancer killer after lung cancer.

“Of all rural deaths, around one-third are caused by various types of cancer.

“Cancer sufferers in the bush have poorer survival rates than those in major metropolitan centres, and the further from a city you are, the more likely you are to die within five years of diagnosis, depending on the type of cancer you have.

“The good news is that 90% of bowel cancer cases can be cured if found early, so it is important that people over 50 take advantage of the FOBT—you can get it from the chemist, and it is free for those turning 50, 55 and 65.

“Some aspects of rural jobs like farming and mining are considered quite dangerous and there are all sorts of OH&S regulations to help save lives.

“But just as you shouldn’t drive a tractor without a roll-bar, you shouldn’t miss your FOBT once you reach the age of 50.”

The Cancer Council, National Health and Medical Research Council and Royal Australian College of General Practitioners recommend that those without symptoms or a family history of bowel cancer screen with an FOBT at least every two years from the age of 50.

“If you aren’t sure what it is all about, talk to your GP about it the next time you have an appointment. FOBT can pick up bowel cancer very early, so it is important that all rural Australians from 50 years on take advantage of this important and painless test” Dr Rischbieth said.

Available for interview: RDAA Vice President, Dr Peter Rischbieth.

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