

Colonoscopy safe in doctor's office



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Colonoscopy, the test to prevent colon cancer, is safely performed in non-hospital settings tens of thousands time daily. Yet on June 29, the *Democrat and Chronicle* published "Have colonoscopies at a hospital" a misinformed article authored by two well-meaning but narrow-minded nurses. That article will likely cost more lives than it will save if even a small number of people are needlessly frightened away from getting checked. To further this point:

Far more individuals get tested for colon cancer out of hospitals than within them.

Doctors and their families have their own colons checked away from hospitals. Why would those who are most informed choose the non-hospital setting if it is less safe?

With regard to infection, the sickest and most dangerously infected people are in hospitals with the potential for exposure to all; hospitals are best to treat diseases, perhaps not so to screen for colon cancer. Not surprisingly, this paper ran a front-page article on the dangers within hospitals July 2.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services encourages physicians to perform colonoscopy (and many health services) in the office and not hospitals for most patients. Hospitals are more expensive to the health care system.

Office endoscopy has been performed safely in Rochester for more than 35 years. It was

safe then. And now the equipment, processes, medications and training are more advanced.

Consider the millions of invasive procedures performed in doctors' offices: Dentists and oral surgeons; gynecologists preventing cervical cancer; nurse midwives who perform deliveries out of hospitals; breast clinics aspirating and performing biopsies; urologists putting instruments in the rectum to check and biopsy for prostate cancer; radiation oncologists who treat rectal cancer internally; otolaryngologists who use endoscopy to diagnose and treat ear, nose and throat cancer; pediatricians placing stitches or giving injections, etc.

Add the thousands of procedures performed each week away from hospitals in fine settings such as Lattimore Community Surgicenter, Westfall Surgical, Brighton Surgical and Lin-

den Oaks Surgical.

All office procedures require sterile equipment and technique, and many utilize medications to reduce pain and anxiety (sedation). Offices like ours are staffed by licensed, board-certified (and recertified) personnel, and they undergo accrediting inspections. It is a disservice to the public health initiative to single out colonoscopy posing greater risk if done away from a hospital building.

It is the integrity of the doctors, nurses, technicians and staff, not the location, that ensures quality and safety. Good care and safe practices are the intention of the vast majority of doctors and nurses everywhere. My advice: Choose your providers carefully, not a building. □

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