



**UPSTATE**  
CANCER CENTER

# We Matter: Increasing Colorectal Cancer Screening in Public Housing Residents

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## Introduction

**We Matter** is the Upstate Cancer Center's successful peer-to-peer colorectal cancer (CRC) education and screening outreach program. **We Matter** uses trained Resident Health Advocates (RHAs) who work in the community where they live to educate and encourage men and women to complete FIT tests or schedule colonoscopies.

## Background

**We Matter** program is a partnership with Syracuse Housing Authority that uses RHAs to educate, raise awareness about prevention and increase screening rates for CRC in hard to reach, low socio-economic status populations. **We Matter** currently focuses on 3 housing complexes of primarily African American residents, who have an increased CRC burden with higher incidence, later stage diagnosis, and increased mortality compared to national averages.

## Objectives

- Increase knowledge about CRC and the importance of screening
- Increase CRC screening in the targeted population.
- Provide navigation for patients with suspicious findings.

## Methods

- Training:**
- Health professionals at Upstate trained 4 RHAs who live in the targeted community about CRC and screening methods.
- Education and Outreach:**
- RHAs educated their peers about CRC risks and early detection during monthly education sessions and through direct outreach.
  - RHAs addressed barriers to access, racial biases, fear and misinformation with cultural sensitivity.
- Screening:**
- Residents  $\geq 50$  years of age were invited to screen via fecal immunochemical testing (FIT) or colonoscopy and assistance in scheduling
  - Each patient who completed a FIT or colonoscopy received a \$10 gift card.
- Communication of Results:**
- Results were sent to the Project Coordinator and Physician Director at Upstate.
  - Reports and letters were sent to each individual and their PCP.
  - Individuals and their PCPs with an abnormal test result were called by the Physician Director and encouraged to seek further testing.

## Project Results (6/30/2016 – 6/29/2017)

- 780 Educated ( $\geq 50$  years of age)
- 76 FIT tests distributed:
  - Females- 46
  - Males- 30
- 21 FIT kits returned
  - 28% return
  - All Negative
- 4 colonoscopies completed
  - 1 Polyp removed

## Conclusions

- The **We Matter** project demonstrated:
- A unique collaboration between a healthcare institution and a public housing authority for better health outcomes.
  - The effectiveness of using trained RHAs to increase CRC awareness and screening in low income, primarily African American men and women through peer outreach, education, and encouragement.
  - The potential to increase screening and reduce cancer disparities on a wider platform.
  - The importance of engaging people in their own surroundings and offering culturally appropriate material and language to increase screening rates.

## Sustainability (6/30/2017 – 3/29/2018)

- Ongoing education by RHAs and annual reminders have resulted in:
- FIT tests distributed: 28
  - FIT tests returned: 11
    - 39% (improving)
  - Colonoscopies: 1
  - Polyps removed: 1



Polyp Men at We Matter Event 2017

## DID YOU KNOW MARCH IS COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH?

We Matters will be hosting an Educational Workshop open to the public with guest speaker Dr. Rowling!

Where: Research Nurses Coffee House  
When: Tuesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>  
11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

There will be FREE lunch and a raffle for a \$25 Walmart Gift Card!



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