

Early Detection & Treatment Means an Excellent Prognosis

August 6, 2002

I am ever searching for topics for this column. If my reckoning is correct, I am into my seventh year and the longer the time, the harder to come up with agendas. I welcome comments and suggestions – good, bad or indifferent.

It was not hard to come up with this week's topic for two reasons. I have been in a real malaise and it has been here before me for the past month because of it, and second I believe it is important to all who may read it.

In a recent column I emphasized the importance of being responsible for our families' safety and ours. Government can only do so much to ensure individual safety. This extends to every facet of our lives from financial, personal safety and the most important of all, health.

I just learned the importance of the last item about one month ago. Fortunately, since I was aware of the importance of that matter, I along with a good many health care professionals made one of the most important findings in mine and my families lives.

Although I have consistently followed recommended annual medical checkups, particularly from age 60 on, I discovered that I was in the very early stages of colon cancer. The early diagnosis began at our local medical facility with its dedicated staff of health care professionals. The steps to proceed expeditiously to its final diagnosis and solution was arranged by our local staff as well.

On July 12, I entered St. Elizabeth's Hospital where under the excellent care of its staff, I had six inches of my colon removed along with the offending cancerous tissue. The cancer was confined to the colon and no traces were found in any other organs.

The whole experience, although far from enjoyable, was not as intolerable as one might imagine. It was certainly nowhere near the consequences awaiting those lacking the courage to pursue the proper path to preventative medicine.

In the case of my problem, I was particularly concerned since my mother also had colon cancer. The test to see if you have a potential problem is called a colonoscopy. It is performed while you are sedated and you are totally unaware of the procedure during and after the examination.

The operation itself was conducted in much the same way and I was totally unaware it was happening. I never saw the operating room or the doctors or staff. All I remember is being prepared and waking up in bed on my way back to my room.

I was festooned with all sorts of hoses that, thankfully, were place there while I was in dreamland. Their removal some five days later was not nearly as unpleasant as it would have been placing them; and what a welcome relief to say the least. Pain was held to a very tolerable level by an epidural anesthesia that regulates the anesthesia sufficient to meet the patient's needs.

I was in the hospital a total of seven days and have nothing but praise for the staff from the doctors and nurses to the food prep and cleaning staff. I had excellent care and have not one complaint. When you are aware of the consequences and severity of the illness you are there for, you have to appreciate fully what is being done for your care.

Although still not entirely out of the woods, my prognoses is excellent. I am very fortunate to have discovered my problem early.

I realize this is not as titillating as some of my political musings; rest assured, as some have feared that I have mellowed - I have not. I believe this topic may be very important for those in the age bracket where an annual complete physical should be a must. If I have convinced even one person to do so, I will feel well paid.

In closing, I wish to thank everyone for their prayers, well wishes, and cards. A special thanks to the Town of Webb Professional Offices staff and to St. Elizabeth's Hospital staff as well.