Colon, Cancer Deaths In General Decrease

Mike Stobbe, AP

The estimate was made in an annual report that shows that, overall, the U.S. cancer death rate is continuing to decline, as it has since the 1990s.

The report released Monday focuses largely on cancers of the colon and rectum, which together are the third leading cancer killer in the United States. An estimated 50,000 people will die from it this year. The battle against colorectal cancer has been a growing success story: The death rate dropped roughly 20 percent in the last 10 years, according to American Cancer Society figures.

The new report predicts that the death rate will drop even more over the next decade. By 2020, the rate could be half what it was in 2000, they said. The prediction assumes colon cancer screening and improved chemotherapy treatment will become more and more common, and colon cancer contributors like smoking and red meat consumption will decline.

The prediction is “optimistic but realistic,” said Elizabeth Ward, who oversees surveillance and health policy at the American Cancer Society. But some other experts said such a large drop could require far-reaching changes in how many people eat a healthier diet, have health insurance and can get good medical care. “I think it's a little bit more optimistic than realistic,” said Dr. Edward J. Benz Jr., president of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

The report is being published in the journal *Cancer*.

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