



Colon Cancer Survivor Saving Others

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(CBS) Colon cancer often causes devastating ripple effects on family and friends of sufferers.

In the final part of a the **CBS News** series "Conquering Colon Cancer," **The Early Show** co-anchor **Harry Smith** reported Friday on one courageous survivor of the disease who has chosen a message of hope and inspiration.

Maybe it was pride, Smith says, that kept Carolyn Holder from asking Jesus for help. She kept telling him she couldn't believe she was so sick.

Holder was greeted with warm, loud applause when she told her church congregation, "I'm here to say I'm alive, and I'm not ashamed to say I'm a cancer survivor."

Never one to back down, Holder fought drug dealers who tried to bring down her neighborhood in Delray Beach, Fla.

But she followed the biggest battle of her life, a fight against a silent killer in colon cancer, by taking on another challenge: inspiring others to get screened.

Addressing fellow church-goers, Holder said: "I'm here to tell each and every one of you, if you don't know what colon cancer is, please know I don't wish or want anybody to go through what I went through. ... "Please, take the test (a colonoscopy, the screening procedure for colon cancer). Save your life."

Holder had never been screened for colon cancer. By the time she started to have severe stomach pains, it was almost too late.

"Her disease was very serious ... meaning, the tumor had grown to the point where it was completely blocking off her intestinal track and was leading to a bowel obstruction," says Miguel Lopez-Viego, a vascular surgeon at **Bethesda Memorial Hospital** in Boynton Beach, Fla.

Holder's good friend, Yvonne Odom, was at her side when she got the bad news: Her stage-four cancer had spread to her liver and lymph nodes.

"I watched her go through the chemo, watched her lose her hair," Odom recalls. "Watched her get where she could hardly get out of the bed."

The chemotherapy resulted in the cancer going into remission.

It is Holder's nature not to ask for help, Smith observed. Instead, she is giving it.

Odom and her husband, Eddie, are just two of the people who followed Holder's advice to get a colonoscopy.

"Oh, yeah, she saved my life," Eddie says.

"I have to go every three years," Yvonne says. "The recommendation for him (Eddie) was every year."

Both found out they had polyps, growths in the colon that could turn into cancer.

"Mine were three little small ones," Yvonne says. "And when I saw his on the screen, I was like, 'Oh, my God!' Because it looked so huge."

Donna Gogreve is another person Holder's illness and spirit have touched.

"I was so uneducated about colon cancer," Gogreve admits.

In the midst of her battle against the disease, Holder's hands were weak, and Gogreve and her co-workers sewed a healing quilt for Holder.

"I couldn't believe that that many people had that type of feeling for me that they would take their time to stitch that quilt," Holder marvels.

Each patch represented a story of her life, woven through the pain, and tears.

"Each block would be a day and each row a week and each column a month," Gogreve says. "At least she could see progress, and something that's so negative turn into something that's really positive."

Thanks to Holder, Gogreve went to get screened, as did Jeannie Moorefield — two more lives potentially saved from colon cancer.

Says Gogreve, "The quilt has no boundaries; cancer has no boundaries; colon cancer has no boundaries."

Holder's healing quilt isn't finished yet, and neither are her grace and good work.

"I've decided to tell the world," she says, "take the test, be tested."

Doctors say It's especially important for African-Americans to get screened because they are at increased risk for colon cancer. Everyone should be screened by age 50, or as many as 10 years earlier if you have relatives with cancer or other risk factors.

For more information on colon cancer check out these sites:

- [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Colorectal Cancer Page](#)
- [The CDC's Screening Demonstration Program](#)
- [EIF's Colorectal Cancer Legislation report card](#)
- [The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy](#)
- [The American College of Gastroenterology](#)

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