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MEDIA RELEASE

Health organisations join forces to promote importance of bowel screening

Picture 1 caption: Bowel cancer project co-ordinators Nerida Firman from Murray Primary Health Network and Sarah Tarquinio from Bendigo Community Health Services promote the free bowel screening kit.

Picture 1 caption: Dee Gilby from the Department of Health and Human Services, Meaghan Bake from Bendigo Health, Sarah Tarquinio from Bendigo Community Health Services and Nerida Firman from Murray Primary Health Network promote the free bowel screening kit.

THREE major health organisations have joined forces to help fight bowel cancer in the Greater Bendigo and Loddon regions.

Bendigo Community Health Services, Murray Primary Health Network and Bendigo Health are working together to increase bowel cancer screening and early detection among local residents.

The organisations are partners in phase 2 of the Department of Health and Human Services-funded Bowel Cancer Screening and Early Detection Project.

Bowel cancer is the second-biggest cause of cancer-related deaths in Australia, but 90 per cent of cases can be successfully treated if detected early.

The project encourages the community to take part in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program which sends free kits in the mail to eligible people aged 50 to 74.

BCHS is raising awareness of bowel cancer and the importance of screening for early detection by promoting the vital message among community groups, businesses and other organisations.

Murray PHN is working with general practice and primary healthcare providers to increase the number of eligible patients being screened for bowel cancer and appropriately referred for colonoscopy.

Bendigo Health's role is to improve the processes for those people referred to the hospital for a colonoscopy.

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is being phased in so that by 2020, everyone aged 50-74 should receive a kit in the mail every two years.

In 2016, kits are being sent to those aged 50, 55, 60, 64, 65, 70, 72 and 74.

Less than 40 per cent of bowel cancers are detected early. There are often no warning signs in the early stages of the disease, so screening is essential and can improve outcomes.

It is recommended that people aged 50 and over undergo screening every two years.

If you are 50 and over and it has been more than two years since your last bowel cancer screen, you should discuss this with your GP.

People should also speak to their GP if they have a family history of bowel cancer, or experience any symptoms such as an unexpected change in bowel habit, blood in their bowel motion, rectal or abdominal pain, unexplained weight loss, weakness or fatigue.

If your business, organisation or community group would like to get involved in promoting the importance of bowel cancer screening, please contact Sarah Tarquinio on 5434 4300.

More information on the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program can be obtained by phoning 1800 118 868 or from www.cancerscreening.gov.au

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