



Published May 24, 2018

[Click here](#) to view the original post on LinkedIn

**All in Chicago: Partnering to Streamline Access
A Community Partners post from The Center for Asian Health Equity**

[The Center for Asian Health Equity](#) (CAHE) is a partnership between the University of Chicago and the Asian Health Coalition, a non-profit, community-based affiliate that works with over 25 different Asian organizations in the Chicago metropolitan area. This academic-community partnership investigates health disparities that disproportionately affect Asian and Pacific Islander populations. The Center takes a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach through a comprehensive program for community engagement, research, education and training, and dissemination and policy. CommunityHealth partners with CAHE on its Cook County CARES program to increase access to cancer screenings for the uninsured.

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second most common cause of cancer death in the United States. Despite strong evidence to support CRC screening, almost 50% of people within the recommended screening age have not completed a diagnostic screening exam – many because they lack access to regular, affordable screening services. Further, Illinois ranks in the last quartile for CRC screening rates across the nation. This problem is further magnified within the uninsured population, who might not readily have access to diagnostic colonoscopy screenings. CAHE has taken an innovative approach to improving access to CRC screening through [The Cook County Colon Cancer Alliance to Reignite and Enhance Screening \(Cook County CARES\)](#).

It is recommended that all adults between the ages of 50 and 75 get a colonoscopy every 10 years and/or complete a take-home FIT or FOBT test every year. A positive FIT or FOBT requires a specialty follow-up for diagnostic colonoscopy. Many clinics like CommunityHealth, as well as a number of Federally Qualified Health Centers in Chicago, are able to screen patients with a FIT/FOBT test. However, for clinics that do not have the same hospital partnerships that CommunityHealth does, it can be very difficult to access timely and high-quality colonoscopy follow-up when needed. In addition, poor communication between primary care and specialty care in many health care centers often delays timely diagnostic colonoscopies.

[Illinois Colon CARES](#) was developed to address this gap in services to timely diagnostic colonoscopy. The web-based portal is an innovative and sustainable technologic infrastructure that has been developed by Cook County Colon Cancer Alliance to Reignite and Enhance Screening (Cook County CARES) to increase linkage to care for uninsured individuals, who generally have low screening and high mortality rates among racial/ethnic minority populations. In its current pilot testing phase, Cook County CARES partners utilize this web space to facilitate CRC diagnostic colonoscopy screenings after a positive FIT/FOBT test is received or when a patient shows symptoms of CRC.

CommunityHealth's CRC screening rate is outstanding (CommunityHealth received the Illinois Association of Free & Charitable Clinics' 2014 Innovation Award for the success of this program) due to the health center's implementation of FIT testing and close partnerships with area hospitals who provide colonoscopies. The Center for Asian Health Equity (CAHE) enhanced this program in 2017 by streamlining an already established partnership between Rush University Medical Center and CommunityHealth for colonoscopy screening. The portal allows point-of-care scheduling and lets both the clinic and hospital track patients and upload timely reports.

To date, CommunityHealth has scheduled and completed 11 colonoscopies through the portal. "If we find colon cancer early, nine out of 10 people can be cured of the disease," said Karen Kim, MD, Professor of Medicine and Director of the Center for Asian Health Equity. The portal coordinates collaborative partnerships to ensure that uninsured patients have access to this life-saving screening.

Visit www.ilcoloncares.com to learn more.

Are you in? Join us as we continue the conversation to build a healthier Chicago in 2018. To learn more, please visit www.allin-chicago.org.