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Colorectal cancer killed 1,366 Israelis last year

Country a leader in survival of disease • Free awareness lecture in Givatayim next week

• By JUDY SIEGEL

Although 1,366 Israelis died last year of colorectal cancer – the second most common malignancy in the country – Israel is a leader in the OECD in survival of this type, second for men and fourth for women.

The Israel Cancer Association, in coordination with the Health Ministry, announced this on Wednesday to open Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in March.

Abroad, the prevalence of colorectal cancer is rising among young people aged 20 to 49, while that among people over 50 is declining because of early detection programs. The American Cancer Association, for example, estimates that according to this trend, by 2030 the prevalence of the cancer in ages 20 to 34 will rise by 90 percent and in those aged 35 to 49 by 28%.

However, among Israelis aged 20 to 49, prevalence of colorectal cancer remains relatively low among Jewish and Arab males and females, without signs of an increase, the ICA said. It is organizing a free conference for patients and their families on colorectal cancer at its headquarters, 7 Revivim Street in Givatayim, on March 9.

According to Prof. Lital Keinan-Boker, deputy director of the ministry's Center for Diseases Control and an adviser to the ICA, 3,224 cases of invasive colorectal cancer – 2,777 Jews and only 280 Arabs – were diagnosed in 2013. Some 5% of the population will at some time have colorectal cancer,

she estimated.

The older the individual, the more common this kind of malignancy is. Other factors that have shown increased incidence of the malignancy are having had precancerous polyps; being overweight and inactive; smoking and drinking alcohol. But it can be diagnosed early in precancerous stages with a colonoscopy.

The ICA and the ministry set up a national program for early detection of colorectal cancer. In 2013, 57% of the relevant age group said they had undergone a (less-accurate) test for blood in the stools or a much more accurate and invasive colonoscopy in the last nine years.

Meanwhile, a small preliminary study recently published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* (which must be expanded to be sure) suggested that it is worthwhile eating dates, which lower the amount of ammonia in the stools and may reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.

Another interesting study, published in the *American Journal of Medical Sciences* showed a connection between polyps in the mucous layer of the uterus in women and the rate of precancerous polyps in their colon and rectum. Such women were five times more likely than women without uterine polyps to have colorectal polyps.

Based on foreign research, the ICA recommended that patients with colorectal cancer who undergo chemotherapy are best off doing regular exercise to reduce the amount of tiredness they feel.