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***HARC Data Shows Over 80,000 Valley Adults 50+
Haven't Taken Basic Test for Colon Cancer***

(PALM DESERT, CA) – More than a quarter of the Coachella Valley's population, ages 50 and older, have not undergone a basic test procedure to check for colon cancer. The findings, published in the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) *Community Health Monitor*, coincide with March being National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

The American Cancer Society estimates that about 108,070 new cases of colon cancer and 40,740 new cases of rectal cancer will be diagnosed in 2008. As the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States, colorectal cancer is expected to result in nearly 50,000 deaths nationally in 2008.

In the HARC study an estimated 28.6% of those interviewed, representing 80,409 adults ages 50 or older, revealed that they had not had a blood stool test to check for colon cancer. Related findings included:

- Over 2.5 times the proportion of Hispanic/Latinos, compared to Whites, (58.4% vs. 21.7%) have **not** had a blood stool test to check for colon cancer.
- Over 30% of the adults in the lower income groups (\$0-\$24,999 and \$25,000-\$49,999) are more likely to report **not** having the test.

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- Younger adults (ages 50-54) are more likely to report **not** having a blood stool test to check for colon cancer.
- **Not** having a blood stool test is equally prevalent among men and women.

HARC's *Community Health Monitor* contains data from more than 3,500 completed household surveys conducted throughout Eastern Riverside County. Respondents fielded questions related to health status, behavioral risks, quality of life issues, access, and utilization of services. A total of 172 questions comprised the adult survey and 136 for children.

Because of the large sample size, researchers were able to deliver statistically valid results in virtually every major survey category. This is in stark contrast to prior needs assessment initiatives with low sample sizes and an emphasis on qualitative, rather than quantitative data.

The research initiative aims to deliver healthcare providers, cities, government agencies, and private interests a snapshot of public health in eastern Riverside County. HARC data will be used to facilitate decision-making on future issues such as program development, access, funding, utilization, and more.

About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 35 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501 ©3 organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities who contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 601-3663, or visiting the organization's website at www.harcddata.org.

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