

doi.org/10.1590/S0004-2803.246102024-01

The Brazilian Blue March Campaign

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Colorectal cancer accounts for 12% of cancer-related deaths, with approximately one in 25 individuals being affected by the disease during their lifetime, representing a 4% risk. In Brazil, it ranks as the second most common cancer in both men, following prostate cancer, and women, following breast cancer.

The estimated number of new cases of colorectal cancer in Brazil for each year of the 2023-2025 triennium is 45,630 cases, corresponding to an estimated risk of 21.10 cases per 100,000 inhabitants⁽¹⁾.

In terms of mortality in Brazil, in 2020, there were 20,245 deaths from colon and rectal cancer, which is equivalent to 9.56 deaths per 100,000 people⁽²⁾.

The good news is that prevention is possible through behavioral measures, focusing on dietary habits and lifestyle choices, especially avoiding sedentary behavior, smoking, and excessive alcohol consumption. In addition to these measures, screening through fecal blood tests and colonoscopy can

diagnose and treat pre-malignant lesions or detect tumors in an early stage, when treatment has a higher chance of success.

In February 2000, President Clinton officially declared the month of March as National Colon Cancer Awareness Month. Over the years, this has evolved into a significant gathering for the colon cancer community. During this month, thousands of individuals, including patients, survivors, caregivers, and advocates, unite in a common cause to raise awareness about colon cancer by wearing the color blue. This initiative was followed by other countries, all adhering to the same principles. Following the example of other countries, March has become associated with colorectal cancer prevention in Brazil since 2020.

Throughout this month, a series of activities take place, such as illuminating important monuments in blue and involving key figures from the fields of art, sports, and opinion leaders. They deliver messages ai-

Received: 5 January 2024
Accepted: 8 January 2024

Declared conflict of interest of all authors: none
Disclosure of funding: no funding received
Declaration of use of artificial intelligence: none
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med at encouraging people to consider the importance of colorectal cancer prevention.

These actions have become possible thanks to the collaborative efforts of three societies: the Brazilian Society of Endoscopy (SOBED), the Brazilian Federation of Gastroenterology (FBG), and the Brazilian Society of Coloproctology (SBCP). Together, they have been promoting screening programs in cities across various states.

In 2020, the charming city of Piranhas, located in the state of Alagoas along the São Francisco River, was screened⁽³⁾. A total of 2152 patients, aged between 50 and 70 years, were screened, 130 of whom underwent colonoscopy. Several preneoplastic lesions were detected in 58 patients. The adenoma detection rate (ADR) was 33.85%.

In 2022, the city of Belterra in the state of Pará, which had previously been screened⁽⁴⁾, underwent a follow-up action where patients indicated for colonoscopy were reevaluated. Additionally, in the same year, the city of Pilar hosted a screening program.

In 2023, it was the turn of the archipelago city of Cairu in the state of Bahia to receive the multi-society team⁽⁵⁾. A total of 1797 individuals underwent fecal occult blood testing, which showed a positivity rate

of 9.7%. Among those referred for colonoscopy, the adenoma detection rate (ADR) was 35%.

The next challenge, set for March 2024, is to screen individuals aged 50 to 70 in the historic city of Óbidos, located in the state of Pará, on the left bank of the Amazon River. People will be required to undergo fecal occult blood testing, and those with positive results will undergo colonoscopy. This project presents complex logistical challenges due to the distances involved and the difficulties of access.

Initiatives like this aim to draw the attention of the population, healthcare professionals, and politicians to the importance of colorectal cancer prevention. Only through such efforts can we hope to establish a national colorectal cancer prevention program in the near future, ultimately saving lives.

Authors' contribution

All authors have contributed on writing the paper.

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Averbach M, Moreira Junior H, Silva HJT, Pessoa FSRP. Campanha março azul no Brasil. *Arq gastroenterol.* 2024;61:e24001.

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