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Centennial Forum: When it's important, you want to tell everybody

by Valada Parker Flewellyn, Special to the Herald

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“Mrs. Flewellyn, wake up – everything went fine,” the nurse said. “Now, I want you to... (and she said the word that the dictionary defines as an offensive term used to describe a release of intestinal gases.)”

I knew just what she meant, and I was not offended. I was amused.

I had just had a colonoscopy, a test to detect cancer in the colon – and it was not as unpleasant as I expected.

And it's a procedure I highly recommend. It is something I am eager to talk about with others because it is important.

My husband's brother died of colon cancer at the age of 39. I suggested to my children not to wait until they are 50 to have a colonoscopy because of the history of colon cancer in the family.

Colon cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in the United States. About 80 percent of colon cancer cases are sporadic, meaning that the cause is nonspecific or undetermined. The other 20 percent are hereditary.

And when colon and rectal cancer are found early there is nearly a 90 percent chance for cure. It is recommended that everyone over the age of 50 have a colonoscopy at least once every 10 years, more often and perhaps earlier if there is a history of colon cancer in the family.

We have such fine physicians and medical facilities in Seminole County, and so many dedicated people who have chosen healthcare as their profession.

Access to good medical care is one of the many reasons it is great to live in Seminole County.

In my case, Dr. Lenkala Mallaiah and the technicians were very efficient and friendly. They seemed to enjoy working together.

This made me feel comfortable.

During my preparation, one of the technicians asked me what I did for a living. I told them I was an author and that I had just written a book called “African Americans of Sanford.” They all were interested and pointed to Hattie, one of the technicians, who is a Sanford native.

For a few moments we talked about how much we all loved books and reading. Hattie told me about her family and I began to tell her about Sanford's Celery Soup folk performance written from family stories...

Then the anesthesia took effect.

The next thing I remember was hearing someone say, "Mrs. Flewellyn wake up..."

Patients are told to have a liquid diet the day before the test, so I jumped at my daughter's suggestion to go to lunch after the procedure.

We entered the restaurant laughing about the instructions for getting the air out of my stomach. I asked that we be seated at the table closest to the restroom.

When our server came, she asked if would we like to sit someplace else and I told her that I had just gotten a colonoscopy.

Then we began to share colonoscopy stories. I was delighted to be able to talk to someone who could relate to the experience.

Later, my daughter shared with my husband that I told everybody we met that day about my colonoscopy. They seemed to find that amusing.

The colonoscopy is such an important test, I told them, that we should tell people who have not had the procedure, how quick and easy it is.

So, if you are over 50 and have not had a colonoscopy, or if there is a history of colon cancer in your family, arrange for the procedure soon.

If detected early, colon cancer is a preventable, treatable and beatable disease.

I had my colonoscopy

Now my colon is clean as can be

By eating veggies, fruit, wheat & grain

Clean is how it will remain.

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