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**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CANCER CENTER STUDY SEEKS TO IMPROVE
COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS AND SCREENING IN BAY AREA
VIETNAMESE COMMUNITIES**

Work of Dr. Bang Nguyen and colleagues tailors screening intervention approach for
Vietnamese populations

FREMONT, CA (March 9, 2009) – The **Northern California Cancer Center (NCCC)**—www.nccc.org—is conducting a first-of-its kind study of interventions to improve colorectal cancer screening rates among Bay Area Vietnamese Americans, a community known to have lower rates of screening for this cancer compared to the general population. NCCC Scientist Bang Nguyen, Dr.P.H. is leading the study of screening interventions that involves developing and distributing educational materials to Vietnamese Americans and health providers in Alameda and Santa Clara counties. While colorectal cancer ranks as the fourth most common cancer in the United States, the disease is largely preventable since screenings can find polyps early before they become cancerous.

“Colorectal cancer can be prevented or, if caught in the early stages, is curable and screenings are critical to both,” said Dr. Nguyen. “Improving the screening rate in a population that is under utilizing this important tool could save lives and lower medical costs—a win for everybody.”

The intervention work has consisted of developing and distributing culturally-sensitive and informative screening booklets, DVDs, patient counseling materials, and health provider newsletters; providing continuing medical education seminars; and producing newspaper, radio, and television advertisements. These materials have run in Vietnamese-targeted media in Alameda and Santa Clara counties with estimates of 115,039 and 26,806 Vietnamese people, respectively. The materials and approach have been designed to be culturally and linguistically competent for addressing the Vietnamese population.

Although screenings are highly successful in preventing colon cancer, the disease is still one of the most common cancers, especially among groups who have unequal access to the information and resources they need to maintain their health. The disease ranks as the third most common cancer for both Vietnamese men and women, and screening rates are lower among Vietnamese

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Americans as compared to non-Hispanic whites, putting the group at an even higher risk of the disease.

“Since many people do not have the tools to prevent cancer in their lives due to lack of awareness, knowledge or access to resources, our work in testing interventions may be the only source of colorectal cancer prevention information for some people.” said Dr. Nguyen.

Dr. Nguyen, whose mother died of colorectal cancer when he was only two years old, has been a colorectal cancer public health researcher at the NCCC for the past 10 years. He says that if the interventions in this study prove to be effective, the evidence-based model can be disseminated in other health promotion programs throughout the United States to further increase colorectal cancer screening rates in Vietnamese Americans and other racial and ethnic groups.

Increased risk of colon cancer has been associated with the following factors:

- Age over 50 (90% of cases)
- Colorectal polyps
- Family history of colorectal cancer
- Genetic alterations (changes in certain genes including HNPCC and FAP)
- Personal history of cancer
- Ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- High fat, low fiber diet
- Obesity
- Smoking cigarettes
- Little physical activity

People can reduce their risk of developing colon cancer by doing the following things:

- Getting the appropriate screenings if you are over age 50 (Fecal Occult Blood Tests should be done every year; sigmoidoscopy, every five years; colonoscopy, every ten years; double contrast barium enema, every five years.)
- Eating less fat and red or processed meats and more fiber, fruits and vegetables
- Exercising
- Quitting smoking

For more information, please visit www.nccc.org or contact Serena Espinosa at 510-608-5160 or serena.espinosa@nccc.org.

About the Northern California Cancer Center:

The Northern California Cancer Center (www.nccc.org) is a nationally recognized leader in researching the causes of cancer and improving the prevention and detection of cancer. Its community programs improve the quality of life for individuals living with cancer. As an independent 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization with a \$14 million operating budget, the Northern California Cancer Center researches who gets cancer and why and has been working with scientists, educators, patients, clinicians, and community leaders since 1974.