

Trevor Noah Discusses Colorectal Cancer With Fred Hutch Scientists

Experts talk about health equity, COVID-19, colorectal cancer and storytelling with “The Daily Show” host Trevor Noah.

April 5, 2022 By Fred Hutch News Service

Trevor Noah, host of The Daily Show, joined Fred Hutch scientists and supporters on March 22 for a conversation about some tough topics, including colorectal cancer and improving equity in health care.

When discussing the challenges of misinformation and complicated topics, Noah reminded listeners of the importance of personal connections and storytelling when trying to encourage people to make changes that could improve their health. And he gave his audience a call to action: “If you don’t learn to tell your stories,” he said, “others will tell your story for you.”

Here are some key takeaways from Noah’s conversation with Fred Hutch experts:

- “Everybody is at risk for colon cancer,” said [Dr. Rachel Issaka](#), a gastroenterologist and clinical researcher focused on decreasing death from colorectal cancer. That’s true even for those who maintain a healthy diet — although steps like reducing your consumption of red meat and increasing fruits and vegetables [can help lower that risk](#). Colon cancer can also be asymptomatic, which is why starting screening at age 45 is so important, said Issaka, who holds the Kathryn Surace-Smith Endowed Chair in Health Equity Research.
- “COVID-19 is a novel virus that is changing all the time, as is our understanding of it,” said [Dr. Michele Andrasik](#), who is the director of social & behavioral sciences and community engagement for both the HIV Vaccine Trials Network and the COVID-19 Prevention Network. She acknowledged people’s frustrations with keeping up with recommendations. Still, she said, “what we know right now is that [having that third booster](#) exponentially increases your ability to

avoid hospitalization and death.”

Each person is the trusted messenger for their own friends and family. As Fred Hutch president and director Dr. Thomas J. Lynch Jr. emphasized during the conversation, it’s about telling a story that shows you care about the person.

Want to see what you missed and check your own knowledge? Read one of these related stories. And when you’re ready to embrace your inner storyteller, share something new you’ve learned with people you care about.

- Misconceptions about colorectal cancer: Issaka and other Fred Hutch colorectal cancer experts [set the record straight about colorectal cancer](#). For instance: Screening is not just for people with symptoms, and colorectal cancer can occur in people under age 50.
- Manage your health, reduce your risk: Fred Hutch researchers share [evidence-based strategies for managing your health](#) and reducing (though not eliminating) your risk for colon cancer and other malignancies.
- Cancer screenings are still critical, despite the pandemic: COVID-19 kept people away from their regular cancer screenings, including for breast, colorectal and prostate cancers. But cancer never went away. Issaka and other Hutch experts [have been working to play catch-up](#).
- Improving communication in cancer care: First, you’re overwhelmed by a cancer diagnosis. Then comes the crazy word salad of cancer-speak. Here are some [tips to help you cut through all the confusion and communicate with your doctors](#).
- How researchers can work with communities of color: Andrasik is the lead author of a recent essay published by [Infectious Disease Clinics of North America](#) that places in historical context the social inequities that led to disproportionate burdens of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous and people of color, or BIPOC communities, throughout the world. Andrasik and her co-authors provide 15 recommendations for working with BIPOC communities to increase participation in preventive interventions like vaccines and participation in trials.

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