Bleeding:

Although the most common source of lower GI bleeding is colorectal cancer, diverticular disease is the most common cause of hematochezia, or bright red or maroon blood per rectum. Bleeding is typically seen in diverticulosis and not diverticulitis. Diverticula tend to herniate through the weakest spots in the colonic wall, where the penetrating blood vessels enter. As the diverticulum grows out, these vessels will only be separated from the bowel lumen by mucosa, therefore becoming more and more vulnerable to injury and rupture. In the majority of patients the right colon is the source of bleeding, even though diverticular disease generally affects the left colon much more commonly. When right-sided diverticula are found, they are almost invariably associated with left-sided diverticula. The propensity for right-sided diverticula to bleed may be because these usually have wider necks and domes, exposing more of the vasa recta. In addition, bleeding stops spontaneously 75% of the time.

In addition to colorectal cancer and other neoplasias, it is important to consider other sources of lower gastrointestinal bleeding including inflammatory bowel disease, arterio-venous malformations, infectious causes, anorectal disease, bowel ischemia, and angiodysplasia.

References: