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CDDW: Colonoscopy details not reaching patients

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From the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology's annual Canadian Digestive Disease Week meeting held in Banff in February 2007

Information about risks, proper screening intervals and different test options is often not available

BANFF, ALTA. | The majority of patients undergoing screening colonoscopy for colorectal cancer are not being informed about the risks of this procedure or different screening test options, according to the results of a patient survey presented at the CDDW meeting here.

Findings from the study also showed that approximately half of the participants recommended for followup were not informed about proper colonoscopy screening intervals.

Dr. Richard Walker of the University of Calgary and his colleagues mailed questionnaires to people who underwent screening colonoscopy in Calgary between January and May 2006.

These were sent one week post-procedure and participants were asked what type of information they received from their family physicians and from colonoscopy clinics throughout their screening and what additional information they would have liked to received.

A total of 630 patients responded, of whom 46% were male and 77% were older than 50.

Results of the survey showed that the majority of patients (93%) did receive their test results, but common additional information patients requested included a written copy of the test result (42%), information on prevention (40%) and information on different colorectal cancer screening tests (24%).

Only 13% of the participants actually received a written copy of their test results and only 12% were informed about different screening tests, while 42% were informed about the risks of colonoscopy.

Additional findings showed that most patients (79%) were told when to have their next screening colonoscopy.

But to the dismay of the researchers, they found that 48% of the patients with negative test results and no family history of colorectal cancer were told to repeat this procedure within three to five years rather than the 10-year interval commonly recommended in guidelines.

"Health care providers may want to incorporate a written copy of test results, information on prevention and different screening options in the screening process," Dr. Walker and his colleagues said in their poster presentation at the meeting.

"It is important that educational strategies be developed for family physicians and specialists to address informational needs of those undergoing screening colonoscopy."

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