

The Medical Post

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CDDW: Don't deprive seniors of colorectal CA screening

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By David Hodges

BANFF, ALTA. | Older patients are receiving fewer recommendations for colorectal cancer screening from their physicians compared with younger patients, according to a study presented at the meeting here.

"Barriers to delivery of colorectal cancer screening in older patients should be identified since these patients may experience a health benefit," said Dr. Maida Sewitch, an assistant professor of medicine at McGill University in Montreal, in her poster presentation.

Otherwise, the screening modality's effectiveness is decreased if patients in their late 60s and 70s don't receive recommendations, she added.

During 2004 and 2005, Dr. Sewitch and her colleagues did a cross-sectional study involving family physicians, internists and their patients at three McGill-affiliated hospitals, using a physician questionnaire to assess differences in screening recommendations by patient age. The research involved 617 patients without previous or current colorectal cancer, of whom 284 were 50 to 64 years of age and 333 were 65 to 80 years.

Fewer recommendations

The questionnaire revealed 46% of the patients (284 of 617) were eligible for colorectal cancer screening. Of these screen-eligible patients, 128 received a physician recommendation for screening, but a significantly smaller proportion of the older screen-eligible patients received a recommendation (36% vs. 53%).

Recommendations for fecal occult blood testing did not differ by age group, but a significantly smaller proportion of older patients received recommendations for screening colonoscopy compared with the younger age group (19% vs. 30%).

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