Patient Education: Colorectal Cancer Screening

Colorectal Cancer Screening Education

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Need Identification

- The American College of Gastroenterology recommends colonoscopies starting at age 45 with repeats every 10 years.
- Patients with a family history of colorectal cancer should have their first colonoscopy 10 years earlier than the age of diagnosis of the first degree family member with colorectal cancer. Repeat exams should happen every 3-5 years for these individuals.
- Community Health Centers in Riverside has seen colonoscopy reluctance for 3 reasons:
    1. Lack of healthcare literacy
    2. Communication barriers
    3. Procedure discomfort

Public Health Cost

- Average colorectal cancer treatment cost ranks second for most expensive cancer treatments in the United States
- In 2021, the United States had an annual initial cancer screening cost of $43 billion
    - Colorectal cancer screening represents 64% of the annual cost
    - Colonoscopies represent 55% of the annual cost

Community Perspectives

- Medical Assistant at Community Health Centers
  - Believes that one of the major barriers to colonoscopies lies in patients lack of understanding of why they need screenings, especially when they are not experiencing any abdominal symptoms.
  - Patients are sometimes lost to follow up as the wait times for colonoscopies are around a year in Burlington, VT.
  - Believes that colorectal cancer screening education will help patients make a more informed decision and increase compliance rates.
- Medical Provider at Community Health Centers
  - Explained that some patients who refuse colonoscopies are more receptive to alternatives such as the cologuard. However, if the screening is positive, the next step would be a colonoscopy, which is often not covered by insurance due to its diagnostic nature at that point.
  - Believes it is essential to encourage and educate patients on colonoscopies to increase compliance and understanding of the importance of routine colorectal cancer screening.

Intervention and Methodology

1. One page educational print out including:
    a. Colorectal cancer screening timeline
    b. Importance of routine screening
    c. Expectations and preparations for colonoscopy
2. Delivered PDF to Community Health Centers in Riverside for patient distribution

Results

- This intervention will help patients understand the importance of colonoscopies in colorectal cancer screenings
    - Patients will have a better understanding of colonoscopy procedures to help them make a more informed decision
- Effectiveness of the procedure can be determined longitudinally by measuring colonoscopy compliance rates and asking for patient feedback
- Challenges faced with implementing intervention include providing enough information without overwhelming patients

Future Directions

1. Interview patients to see if the educational handout helped them make an informed decision on colorectal cancer screening
2. Translate educational handout into different languages
    a. CHC sees many Nepali and Swahili speaking individuals
3. Educate patients on alternative screening methods
4. Quantify colonoscopy compliance rates before versus after

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