

Week 2 (March 9)

Interested in seeing how well your county or state has done in providing colon cancer screening to people with Medicare? Click on the following link:

<http://www.mrnc.org/crcreport2/>

Medical Review of North Carolina, Inc., calculated national, state, and county colon cancer screening rates using Medicare claims data from 1998-2002. Almost 45% of those eligible for screening had at least one test in the five-year period. Other highlights from the data:

- Persons ages 65-74 comprised the largest eligible group (43%), but test use was highest among people ages 75-84 (50%);
- Test use was highest among Caucasians (46%) followed by Asians (40%), African Americans (36%), persons of Hispanic descent (36%) and Native Americans (28%);
- There was considerable disparity between the test rates for those eligible for only Medicare (47%) and persons eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid (35%);
- Persons eligible for Medicare due to a disability also had lower test rates (37%) than those eligible because of age (46%);
- Among the four covered tests, FOBT was the most commonly used test with a rate of 30%. Colonoscopy had the second highest use rate (23%), followed by sigmoidoscopy (12%) and barium enema (5%);
- Interval-based testing rates were much lower than the five-year Any CRC Test rate (30.7% compared to 44.9%).

What does all of this mean? Use of the Medicare covered colorectal cancer screening benefit has been low. Although no part of the Medicare population has high rates of test use, some groups are clearly at risk of not being tested, including people of racial and ethnic populations, the disabled, and those who have both Medicare and Medicaid.

What can you do? March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Colorectal cancer is preventable, treatable, and beatable. Encourage your patients to get screened—it could save their life.

For more information about Medicare's colorectal cancer screening benefit, including coverage, coding, billing, and reimbursement, refer to "*The Guide to Medicare Preventive Services for Physicians, Providers, Suppliers, and Other Health Care Professionals*" located at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/PSGUID.pdf> on the CMS Medicare Learning Network (MLN) web page. In addition, CMS has issued Special Edition *MLN Matters* article SE0613 on colorectal cancer screening—click on the following link <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0613.pdf> to review this article.

The CMS website also has a prevention website which contains a section on colorectal cancer screening. Click on <http://www.cms.hhs.gov>, select "Medicare", and scroll down to "Prevention" to find the colorectal cancer screening section.

