

INTRODUCTION

Colorectal cancer (CRC) screening is effective in preventing death due to colon cancer. Screening tests include stool-based tests and direct visualization. Rate of screening in eligible US adults is low at 68%. This rate is even lower at 54% in our resident run clinic.

METHODS

We included patients – age 50-75 years – who were overdue for CRC screening from January 2019-December 2020. 428 patients met these criteria. 70 patients were selected randomly. Each patient was called and interviewed using a standardized, 8 question survey.

RESULTS

51 patients completed the patient survey. 69% of responders self-identified as black with 25% identifying as white and 6% other. 24 patients (47%) had been ordered a CRC screening test during the study period. A total of 25 (41%) patients did not remember CRC screening being discussed during their visit, including 29% of those patients who did have a test ordered. Most patients (61%) were unaware of different CRC screening methods. When examining the importance of screening on a scale of 1-10, patients reported a mean of 7 and median of 8. 45% of patients said more information about CRC would motivate them to be screened, while 43% said this would not affect their motivation. Many patients cited being busy as reason for not getting screened. Others stated they did not want to do it or were concerned about discomfort. None of the patients reported a personal negative experience with CRC screening.

DISCUSSION

Only about half of patients who were due for screening had a test ordered. Most patients did not recall discussing screening – including a significant proportion of those who had a test ordered. This may suggest that CRC screening is getting lost among many other competing demands during the primary care visit. Majority of patients were not aware of different screening methods. Providers may need to offer other methods of screening. This might be limited as they may not feel comfortable discussing alternate methods of screening. The reasons cited for not completing screening focused on difficulties related to colonoscopy – time, discomfort, preparation. Patients may be more accepting of non-invasive screening methods if they receive adequate information of these options. Patients who did remember having a non-invasive test ordered commented that they forgot to send it back. Providing some type of reminder for patients who are ordered non-invasive testing may be helpful as well.