



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING CAN PREVENT DIMINISHED HEALTH THAT CAN LEAD TO DISABILITY

Through appropriate screening, 75-90 percent of colorectal cancers can be prevented.

A congressional briefing was held on colorectal cancer screening by a group of medical and consumer organizations. Presenters at the forum were researchers, policymakers and consumer advocates for colorectal cancer screening.

Summary

There are nearly 150,000 people diagnosed with colorectal cancer each year, and 91% of these diagnoses are in people over the age 50. About 72% of cases arise in the colon and about 28% in the rectum. The American College of Gastroenterology recommends that screening begin at age 50 using one of the following techniques: fecal occult blood testing each year, flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years, fecal occult blood testing every year combined with flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years, double-contrast barium enema every five to 10 years or colonoscopy every 10 years.

Through appropriate screening, the development of more than 75-90 percent of colorectal cancer can be prevented by avoiding risks. There is a 90% five-year survival rate if diagnosed at the localized stage. There are 41% of people over age 50 who report having colorectal screenings compared with 86% of women screened for breast cancer. However, there are barriers to screening that include lack of time, inconvenience, cost, fear of being diagnosed with cancer, and unpleasantness of the test. Control of risk factors are those of overweight and obesity, diet, variety of fruits and vegetables, no smoking and alcohol, with medications and dietary supplements as preventive measures.

Disability Prevention Issue

A public health concern is disparities in mortality among states and vulnerable populations. For instance, the prevalence of colorectal cancer in Kentucky is approximately 50% greater than in Utah, and there is a 27% discrepancy in survival rates of the uninsured when blacks are compared to whites. In addition, the uninsured are more than 3 times less likely to be screened than the insured. There are seven stages of survival rates for people with colorectal cancer—when diagnosed in stage one, there is a 93% survival rate. When diagnosed in the last stage, that survival rate drops to 8%. Thus, there are periods of diminished health of people with cancer who will be disabled. Provisions for these people

need to assure, to the maximum extent possible, that accommodations are made to maximize self sufficiency and prevent disability.

Intervention

A letter was sent to the keynote speaker to comment on colorectal screening with respect to limiting the period of functional limitations associated with disability.

Recommendation

Adequate resources should be provided for universal screening for colorectal cancer.