Patient Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening

When developing best practices for communicating with your patients about colorectal cancer screening, it is important to recognize that certain patient populations may have additional concerns or barriers to getting screened. In some cases, factors like race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, marital status or psychosocial preconceptions may affect a patient’s decision to get screened. Therefore, it is beneficial to gain a better understanding of these differing perspectives in order to effectively communicate the importance of colorectal cancer screening [1] to each patient.

Race/Ethnicity Considerations

Although colorectal cancer affects men and women of all ages and races/ethnicities, the incidence and mortality rates of colorectal cancer are higher in African Americans compared with rates in other races [1,2]. This may be in part because fewer African Americans get screened [2].

Colorectal Cancer Incidence Rates* by Race/Ethnicity and Gender [3]

![Graph showing colorectal cancer incidence rates by race/ethnicity and gender.

Socioeconomic and Psychosocial Barriers

Beyond race/ethnicity, there are other barriers to consider that may prevent some people from getting screened, such as language, age and social circumstances. One study reported barriers among a group of

*Per 100,000 persons; age adjusted to 2011 US standard population. Not mutually exclusive from other groups.
ethnically and linguistically diverse people who received care at community health centers in the Boston area. Low-income and low-education levels spanned the diverse group and may be responsible for underlying barriers to screening. In this study, four principal factors prevented these people from being screened for colorectal cancer.

4 factors may prevent people from being screened for colorectal cancer

- Distrust of doctors
- No HCP recommendation
- Lack of symptoms
- Fatalistic beliefs about cancer

Other studies found additional barriers to screening:

Additional barriers preventing people from colorectal cancer screening

- Unmarried status
- Lack of time

- Unmarried people were less likely to adhere to colorectal cancer screening recommendations.
- Among some people at risk for colorectal cancer, time constraints were a major impediment to preventive screening.
  - In a recent survey of men and women aged 50 years and older, 18% cited being too busy as their primary reason for not getting screened.

Downloadable Tools

The Love Your Colon initiative offers a range of materials designed to help you educate your patients on colorectal cancer and the importance of screening. Many of these materials are available in several languages. Access these colorectal cancer educational tools [2].
References


