Colon Cancer Rates Increasing in the Younger Population

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PICOT Question

In young adults aged 20 to 30 years old with family history of colorectal cancer **(P),** what is the effect of initiating colorectal cancer screening **(I)** before 45 years of age compared with standard screening time frame of colorectal cancer screening between 45 to 75 years of age **(C)** on identifying colorectal cancer risk at Stage III or earlier **(O)** within 5 years of identifying colorectal cancer risk **(T)**?

Background

The current guideline regarding colorectal cancer (CRC) screening encourages screening starting at age 45 in those at high risk, per the American Cancer Society (American Cancer Society, 2020). In recent years, the prevalence of colorectal cancer has become more significant in adults under the age of 45 (Peterse et al., 2018). A study showed that there was a 29.6% increase from 2001 to 2011 in the age group of 20–34 years (Sifaki-Pistolla, 2022). As a result of this, CRC screening guidelines should be modified to increase screening in the 20-30 year old age group population that have a family history of CRC, or meet the lifestyle or environmental risk factors for colorectal cancer. The modification of the CRC screening guidelines are aimed at the increased detection of CRC in the earlier, non-metastasized stages, in order to improve health outcomes and promote early treatment in populations that are vulnerable for the development of CRC.

Literature Search

Database:

- PubMed, American Society of Clinical Oncology, American Cancer Society

Key Search Terms:

- Colorectal Cancer Screening, Early Colorectal Screening, Early-Onset Colorectal Cancer

Article Selection Criteria:

- Published between 2017 and 2022
- Published in English
- Published in a scholarly journal
- Aligns with research question
- Includes the population (Young adults aged 20 to 30 years old with a family history of colorectal cancer)

Synthesis of Findings

- There has been an increase in development of colorectal cancer diagnoses in patients under the age of 50 years old.[2,3,5,6]
- There is evidence to support that the initiation of early colorectal cancer screenings (prior to 50 years of age) has been associated with earlier detection of colorectal cancer in younger populations.[3]
- Globally, there is evidence that there is a higher incidence of colorectal cancer in some high-income countries.[5]
- Gastrointestinal cancers had the fastest-growing incidence rates among all early-onset cancers.[2]
- Studies show that the younger adult population who are diagnosed with colorectal cancer have more advanced disease than the older adult population.[1,2,4,6]

Evaluation

Evaluation tools referenced in the selected literature include:

- American Cancer Society Colorectal Cancer Screening Guidelines
- Random Meta-Analysis Studies
- Clavian-Dindo Classification System

How will the tools be utilized?

- These tools will be utilized to continuously assess the relationship between the age of a client who meets the risk factors for developing colorectal cancer against the efficacy of colorectal cancer screening on the identification of colorectal cancer at a non-invasive (metastasized) stage.

Who will complete them & where?

- Oncologists and primary care physicians should be the primary point of contact for implementing these interventions.
- Clients between 20-30 years of age who meet the risk factors for colorectal cancer should be encouraged by their primary care provider to be screened. In the event that colorectal cancer is detected, the primary care physician should refer the client to an oncologist for further evaluation.
- Oncologists should collaborate with the American Cancer Society to follow the relationship between screening at age 20-30 and the stage of colorectal cancer identified. This will enable oncologists to assist the American Cancer Society in identifying if the intervention of early screening on clients who are at likely risk for developing colorectal cancer is beneficial in improving earlier treatment and/or improved health outcomes.
- Oncology nurses may also use these tools to provide further education to advocate for screening to patients between the ages of 20-30 years old who present early risk factors to colorectal cancer like excess body weight, cigarette smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, a high intake of red processed meat, family history, and physical inactivity.

Decision to Change

A decision to change nursing practice is encouraged. Based upon the increasing prevalence of colorectal cancer in populations younger than 45, the screening guidelines for colorectal cancer should begin as young as 20 years of age for patients who are at high risk for developing colorectal cancer, and at age 30 for those who are not high risk for colorectal cancer development.[2,3,5,6]

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