

Virtual colonoscopies help identify additional cancers outside of the colon, study suggests

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Although the medical community has already accepted that colorectal cancer (CRC) screening is cost effective and saves lives, researchers have found that computed tomography colonography (CTC or virtual colonoscopy) not only identifies CRC but also doubles the yield of identifying significant early extracolonic (outside the colon) lesions, resulting in lives saved, according to a study in the September issue of the *American Journal of Roentgenology*.

CTC is an emerging noninvasive rapid imaging technique developed for colorectal cancer (CRC) screening. It is less invasive than optical [colonoscopy](#) and may improve patient adherence and CRC screening.

In addition to intracolonic (within the colon) findings, CTC examines the entire abdomen and pelvis similarly to a CT scan. "The ability of CTC to identify significant extracolonic [lesions](#) at an early treatable stage may increase the yield of CRC screening, thus enhancing CTC as a major screening technique," said Ganesh R. Veerappan, MD, lead author of the study.

The study, performed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, included 2,277 patients who underwent CTC. Of those patients, extracolonic findings were identified in 1,037 patients, with 787 insignificant and 240 significant findings.

"When considering extracolonic findings, CTC increased the odds of identifying high-risk lesions by 78 percent. CTC should be considered as

an alternative to optimal colonoscopy for colorectal [cancer screening](#) or as a onetime procedure to identify significant treatable intracolonic and extracolonic lesions," said Veerappan.

More information: www.ajronline.org

Provided by American College of Radiology

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