

U.S. minorities less likely to get colon cancer screening

January 15 2013

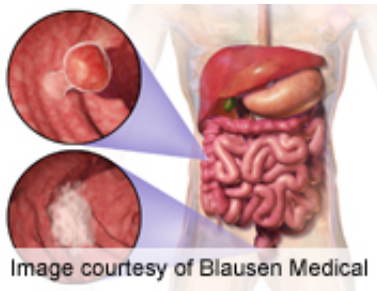


Image courtesy of Blausen Medical

Researcher says reasons include high cost, lower health literacy, lack of doctors.

(HealthDay)—Minority patients in the United States are less likely than whites to be screened for colorectal cancer, a new study finds.

Researchers analyzed national data from between 2000 and 2005 and found that 42 percent of whites were screened for colorectal cancer, compared with 36 percent of blacks, 31 percent of Asians and Native Americans and 28 percent of Hispanics.

Although it is widely believed that lack of access and money are the main barriers to getting screenings, this study found that other factors play a role in the lower [screening rates](#) for [minority patients](#).

These factors include transportation issues, difficulty getting paid time off from work and low levels of [health literacy](#), which is the ability to

read, understand and use health information.

High levels of fatalism—the view that getting a disease is a matter of luck or fate—and low levels of health literacy among low-income Hispanics may play a strong role in whether they seek out colorectal cancer screening, according to the study, which was published in the December 2012 issue of the journal *Health Affairs*.

"Racial and ethnic minorities have unique challenges navigating the health care system, in some cases because they are immigrants and there are language issues, or they live in areas with high levels of uninsurance or ... few gastroenterologists," study author Jim Stimpson, director of the Center for Health Policy at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, said in a center news release.

Stimpson outlined some possible solutions, including:

- Identifying and providing incentives for doctors to perform colonoscopies in underserved areas, which could include paying doctors more.
- Providing patients with transportation to clinics.
- Training other [health care providers](#) to perform colonoscopies under the supervision of a gastroenterologist via telemedicine.

"[Colorectal cancer screening](#) saves lives," Stimpson said. "We need to increase the number of people who get this screening, and especially focus on solutions that reduce the disparity in screening for racial or ethnic minorities."

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about [colorectal cancer screening](#).

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Citation: U.S. minorities less likely to get colon cancer screening (2013, January 15) retrieved 30 April 2024 from

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