

Lower use of cancer-related imaging in VA health system

December 3 2014



(HealthDay)—Cancer-related imaging use is lower in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system than in fee-for-service Medicare, and use is not associated with geographic variation, according to research published in the Dec. 2 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

J. Michael McWilliams, M.D., Ph.D., from Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues conducted an observational analysis to compare average use and geographic variation in use of cancer-related imaging between fee-for-service Medicare and the VA [health care system](#). Medicare and VA utilization data were linked to cancer registry data for the period 2003 to 2005. Participants were older men with lung, colorectal, or [prostate cancer](#) and included 34,475 traditional Medicare beneficiaries and 6,835 VA patients.

The researchers found that in the VA versus the Medicare cohort the adjusted annual use of cancer-related imaging was lower (price-weighted count, \$197 versus \$379 per patient; P

"Use of cancer-related imaging was lower in the VA [health care](#) system than in fee-for-service Medicare, but lower use was not associated with less [geographic variation](#)," the authors write.

One author disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

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Citation: Lower use of cancer-related imaging in VA health system (2014, December 3) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

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