

The Role of Primary Care Physicians and Reminder Systems in Increasing Colorectal Screening Recommendation [Letter]

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Dear editor

We read with great interest the original research article “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Physicians Regarding Screening of Colorectal Cancer in Qatar: A Cross-Sectional Survey”.¹ As practicing surgeons in the UK, it was interesting to consider whether the poor compliance and recommendation is actually to be expected from internal medicine physicians?

It has been recognised across Europe that primary care physicians hold an important role in screening of colorectal cancer, but they have a changing role due to the introduction of population based screening programmes. Their role is now far more supportive and informative, facilitating the screening opposed to implementing. Qatar similarly has a population based screening programme, where patients are contacted via telephone.²

Hospital physicians in the UK would seldom be involved with screening uptake in asymptomatic patients, due to limited time and priority of acute pathologies. This is mirrored in this author’s study results. It would be interesting to extend the study to primary care physicians to see if they have increased compliance and recommendation versus their internal medicine counterparts, given in the UK this is where we would expect to see improved results.

Secondly, previous similar studies frequently found forgetfulness to be a common reason for poor recommendation rates, a reason not explored in the author’s survey. Subsequent meta-analysis found physician-targeted reminder systems to be a simple cost effective method to increase uptake and recommendation.³ This simple intervention could be utilised in Qatar’s current electronic healthcare programme.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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