



Abstract of parallel session: 4

Title: Colorectal cancer testing in Swiss primary care practices: A cross-sectional study in the Sentinella Network

Presenting Author(s): Emanuele Prati¹

Institutes: ¹Institute of primary health care (BIHAM), University of Bern, Switzerland, ²President Sentinella Network, Switzerland, ³Institute for Biomedical Ethics and History of Medicine (IBME), UZH, Zürich, ⁴Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (IUMSP), University of Lausanne, Switzerland, ⁵Department of Ambulatory Care and Community Medicine (PMU), University of Lausanne, Switzerland, ⁶Northern California Division of Research, Kaiser Permanente, United States of America

Authors (s): Leonhard Braun¹, Emanuele Prati¹, Yonas Martin¹, Charles Dvořák², Kali Tal¹, Nikola Biller-Andorno³, Jean-Luc Bulliard⁴, Jacques Cornuz⁵, Kevin Selby^{5,6}, Reto Auer^{1,5}

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Abstract

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Background: Guidelines recommend colonoscopy and fecal occult blood test (FOBT) for colorectal cancer (CRC) screening. While we have data on CRC testing rates among the Swiss population from telephone surveys, we don't know the rates among patients visiting primary care physicians (PCP) in Switzerland.

Objective: We aimed to determine the proportion of 50-75-year old patients visiting PCP, that had already been tested for CRC (colonoscopy within 10 years, or FOBT within 2 years), and with which method they had been tested. We also determined variation in care between PCP practices and further determined factors associated with the proportion of patients tested and methods used for testing at the PCP level.

Design: We collected data in 129 PCP reporting for the Sentinella Network, a practice-based research network coordinated by the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). Each practice collected demographic data and CRC testing status on 40 consecutive patients. In multivariate-adjusted mixed-effect logistic regression models we explored factors associated with the proportion of patients tested for CRC and the testing method within each PCP.

Result: We included 91 PCP (Mean age 54, 76% male), collecting data from 3451 included patients (Mean age 63, 49% male). Overall, 46% had been tested for CRC within recommended intervals (41% colonoscopy, 4% with FOBT). We observed variations between PCPs in proportions of patients tested (range 8-86%, Q1: 36%, Q3: 57%) and proportion tested with colonoscopy vs. FOBT (range 0-91%, Q1 0%, Q3 10%). In multivariate models, PCPs from the French or Italian speaking part of Switzerland were more likely to prescribe FOBT than PCPs in the German speaking part (OR of testing at least one patient with FOBT: 4.4, 95% CI: 1.5 - 12.6).

Conclusion: Less than half the population visiting a primary care physician has been tested for CRC within the recommended intervals in Switzerland. PCPs vary widely in their testing practices.

Keywords: primary health care, colorectal cancer, fecal occult blood testing, colonoscopy, variation in care