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Determining local colorectal cancer screening utilization patterns.

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Appropriate screening for colorectal cancer saves lives, yet many Americans at average risk for this disease are not being screened. This article presents the results of an inexpensive, manageable telephone survey that can be used by health departments to determine point prevalence estimates for colorectal cancer screening in their community and to determine local barriers to screening. In Onondaga County, this survey demonstrated that only 17% of the eligible population had been screened with annual fecal occult blood test and a flexible sigmoidoscopy. The study also demonstrated that locally the most significant barrier to screening was lack of knowledge of the importance of such testing. Finally, health care professionals were shown to play a pivotal role in improving the health of their patient population by encouraging screening for colorectal cancer.

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