



Participation in colorectal cancer screening in Germany: results from nationwide claims data (2009–2018)

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Abstract

Background

In Germany, the approach to screening for colorectal cancer has long been opportunistic and, only recently in 2019, an organized screening program was implemented. The aim of the present study was to describe the participation in colorectal cancer screening examinations in the decade before the organized program had been introduced (2009–2018).

Methods

We used ambulatory claims data from the years 2009 to 2018 of individuals aged 50 to 74 years. We computed the participation rate considering three examinations, namely the fecal occult blood test (FOBT), the preventive colonoscopy and, additionally, the curative/therapeutic colonoscopy. Participation rate was calculated for each year, according to sex, age group (50–54, 55–64 and 65–74 years) and region, always in relation to the total number of eligible persons of the statutory health insured population. Using a cohort of 326,337 men and 411,872 women aged 55 years in 2009 we estimated the cumulative participation in screening examinations over a ten year period.

Results

The participation in FOBT was generally higher in women compared to men (2018: 23% vs. 7.4% in the age group 50–54). Over the observation period, the yearly rate of participating in FOBT decreased by –21% among women and –15% among men in the primary target age range of 50–54 years. The yearly utilization of preventive colonoscopy was stable at 2.6% among women and 2.5% among men in the primary target age range of 55–64 years. In cohort analysis, 35% of men and 47% of women participated in one preventive colonoscopy or in at least three FOBT as measure of fulfilling the screening recommendations. Taking curative colonoscopy additionally into account, the participation rate increased to 46% and 58% in men and women, respectively. Remarkable differences were observed between districts, which were slightly attenuated when considering curative colonoscopies.

Conclusion

The participation in colorectal cancer screening examinations has still room for improvement and varies between regions in Germany. The recent implementation of the organized colorectal cancer screening gives rise for the hope that overall participation will increase and regional differences diminish. Thus, the present study can be considered as baseline and reference for future studies investigating participation in the recently implemented organized screening program.



Keywords

Cancer screening, colonoscopy, colorectal cancer, faecal occult blood test, participation

Citation

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