

New Mexico

Mandating Colorectal Cancer Screening Coverage to Save Lives

Producing Results

Citing BRFSS data, which showed that colorectal cancer screening rates were significantly better in states with mandatory coverage, New Mexico's Legislature passed a law that now requires health insurance providers to pay for colorectal screening for New Mexico residents age 50 and older.

Public Health Problem

If caught in its early stages, people treated for colorectal cancer have a 5-year relative survival rate of 90%. As many as 60% of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented if everyone age 50 and older were screened regularly. Data show that screening for colorectal cancer lags far behind screening for other cancers. Use of screening for colorectal cancer is particularly low among those who lack health insurance, those with no usual source of health care, and those who reported no doctor's visits within the preceding year.

Taking Action

According to BRFSS data, New Mexico's colorectal cancer screening rates are 52.9%, which is below the national median of 57.1%. Citing BRFSS data, which showed that colorectal cancer screening rates were significantly better in states with mandatory coverage, New Mexico's Legislature passed a bill (HB 510) to address one barrier to screening: its cost. The law now requires health insurance providers to cover colorectal screening for New Mexico residents age 50 and older. New Mexico joins 22 other states with mandatory colorectal cancer coverage laws.

Implications and Impact

The availability of BRFSS data that demonstrated the positive impact of mandatory insurance coverage for colorectal cancer screenings prompted legislative change in New Mexico. With New Mexico law mandating that health insurance providers pay for this valuable screening, it can be expected that more of New Mexico's residents will get the recommended screenings, resulting in fewer colorectal cancer deaths overall.