

News to Digest

Health tips from your Gastroenterologist...



Digestive Health & Nutrition

Affiliated with the Three Rivers Endoscopy Center

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PLEASE HELP ME FIX A STUPID LAW

by Robert Fusco, MD

Frank W. is a 66 year old retired plumber from New Brighton who never had a colonoscopy. From the time he had turned fifty, his family doctor had recommended this important screening test. He had been working two jobs at the time and had heard bad things about the large volume laxative preparation that was required, so he just kept putting it off. Now that he was retired and on Medicare, he decided that it was time to start taking care of his health. He knew that Medicare provides a free screening colonoscopy every 10 years and called for an appointment.

The Good News...

The test went well. He was surprised that the new low volume laxative preparation was so simple and with new sedation techniques, the procedure was quick and totally painless.

Even though he had no symptoms, a large polyp was found in his rectum, but fortunately,

it was easily removed during the colonoscopy. Final biopsy showed an early cancer that was confined to the tip of the polyp and no further treatments were necessary.



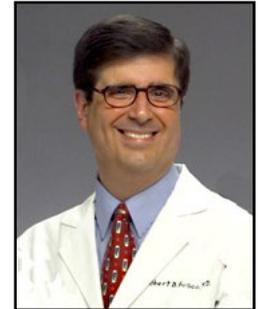
Considering how long he delayed screening, he was lucky that the polyp was discovered before widespread cancer developed. That was the good news...

The Bad News...

Then came the BAD NEWS. He was informed by Medicare that even though he had no symptoms, since the doctor had found and removed a rectal polyp, his colonoscopy was NOT considered a SCREENING EXAM, but rather a THERAPEUTIC procedure. With that new classification, he was now responsible for a large deductible and copay which came to hundreds of dollars. *That is Medicare law and there is no way around it...*

Why is this?

It is just a matter of wording. When the original law was written, it did not take into account that colon polyps are found in more than 25% of men and 15% of women. *The language of the bill does not consider the exam to be a preventative SCREENING exam if a biopsy is performed or a polyp is removed.* That was not the intent of Congress. It was just an oversight. But for the past 10 years, this error has penalized those individuals whose lives may have been saved by removal of a precancerous polyp. *Your FREE screening colonoscopy is only free if it is normal.* That is wrong!



Endoscopy Center Excellence Award

Our doctors are proud to announce that Three Rivers Endoscopy Center (TREC) is recipient of the **Endoscopy Unit Recognition Award** by the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE). The ASGE is known as the profession's leader in setting standards for excellence in endoscopy. This recognition acknowledges that our endoscopy unit is dedicated to delivering high-quality endoscopic care and has received specialized training in quality assurance, endoscopy reprocessing, and CDC infection control guidelines.



How you can help

This poorly written legislation needs to be corrected as soon as possible and YOU can help make this happen. For years, physicians have petitioned Congress to correct this oversight. **Finally, this year a bipartisan effort is being made with two proposed bills:**

Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act of 2015

U.S. Senate Bill = S. 624
U.S. House Bill = H.R. 1220

I NEED YOUR HELP. This is our chance to correct this bad law. Please contact your US. Senator and U.S. Representative. Ask them to COSPONSOR this legislation and VOTE for it.

It may seem complicated, but using the internet, you can contact your Congressman directly in just a few minutes time. PLEASE TAKE 10 MINUTES TO HELP ME CHANGE THIS LAW.

Here is how:

1. First, you must access this Internet site:

www.gastroadvocacy.org/legislatorsearch.aspx

Find Your Legislators

Find your lawmakers by clicking on a chamber type below and then selecting a state.

To search by committee, [click here](#).

Specify State	Select Chamber Types
State: <input type="text" value="Pennsylvania"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U.S. Senate
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Search by Address	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U.S. House
Address: <input type="text" value="Optional"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> State Governor
Address 2: <input type="text" value="Optional"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> State Senate
City: <input type="text" value="Optional"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> State House
Zip: <input type="text"/>	

2. Select your State in the drop down menu.

3. This is *not* a State matter, so uncheck the boxes for your State Governor, State Senate, and State House Representatives.

4. Check the box for "Search by Address" and just enter your 9-digit Zip Code and click on UPDATE

I live in Sewickley and my search came up with this:

U.S. Senate



Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr (D)

U.S. House



Sen. Patrick Joseph Toomey (R)



Rep. Keith James Rothfus (R)

5. Once you have accessed the page for your Congressmen, you can contact them in several ways. I suggest using the EMAIL option. They will ask for your contact information. Fill that out and pick the Topic "HEALTHCARE".

The Senate and House versions of the same bill have different reference numbers.:

To email your US Senator, the Title of your message should be:

PLEASE COSPONSOR and SUPPORT S. 624

To email your U.S. Representative, the Title of your message should be:

PLEASE COSPONSOR AND SUPPORT H.R. 1220

What to write

It is not necessary to write a long message. Just repeating the title in the message box would get the point across. You may wish to express your views on this badly written Medicare law and the importance of correcting it. You can read the sample message below and use all or parts if you wish. If you are accessing this on a computer, you can simply copy and paste. The important thing is that you tell your legislators in Washington, DC to fix this problem. If you are not of Medicare age now, this will probably affect you when you reach that age if you do nothing now.

[If you write, let me know at info@gihealth.com]

SAMPLE MESSAGE:

You can just copy and paste this message or use this information to write your own.

Your Medicare constituents need your help correcting a badly written Medicare law that has been a significant stumbling block to screening colonoscopy for years. As you well know, colorectal cancer is a common, silent and deadly disease. In fact, it has become the number one cancer-killer in non-smoking adults. The sad news is that even though we have had a highly effective tool to actually PREVENT colon cancer (screening colonoscopy) for over 40 years, it still kills more Americans than any other cancer except lung cancer.

One major problem is that currently Medicare promotes screening colonoscopy as a FREE service (no deductible or copay) to its members AND THEN charges seniors a deductible and copay IF a polyp is removed or a biopsy taken. **The exam is only free if it is normal. This makes no sense.** The problem with this law is the way current legislation is worded. This is wrong and needs to be corrected.

Please cosponsor and vote for - Removing Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening Act of 2015 which waives cost-sharing for preventative screening should the procedure become therapeutic after the fact. Also, please ask that this bill allows screening exams for patients with positive stool screening tests.

Preventative care (like screening colonoscopy) helps save lives and keeps Americans healthy. We must do everything possible to encourage patients to take advantage of these procedures. I look forward to your support.

Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition

The Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition is a private medical practice in Moon Township, PA with six experienced gastroenterologists, two registered nurse practitioners, and staff that is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of digestive disorders.

Our physicians have been serving the needs of those in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas since 1977 with a combined medical staff clinical experience of over 200 years. We have cared for tens of thousands of individuals with digestive problems.

We fully understand the very sensitive nature of digestive illness and realize that each case is unique. Our objective is to consistently deliver high quality personal care in an efficient, private, and patient friendly environment. We are very proud of the care we provide our patients and would be honored to care for you and your family should any digestive issues arise.

For more information, give us a call at 412.262.1000 or access our website at www.gihealth.com.

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