

Research Summary: The Revised Colorectal Cancer Screening Guideline and Screening Burden at Community Health Centers

- In 2021, the US Preventive Services Task Force lowered the age of eligibility from 50 to 45 for colorectal cancer screening, increasing the number of people who need screening.
- Colorectal cancer is becoming more common in those age 45 to 54. Getting screened at 45 and regularly from then on can help save lives.
- The study wanted to find out how many health center patients need to be screened under the new guidelines and how many are actually getting screened.



Scan QR code to
read the full paper!



WHO PARTICIPATED

- 10 community health centers in Massachusetts.

WHAT WE DID

- Reviewed the health records of 70,808 patients age 45 to 75 to understand how many additional people were eligible for screening and screening rates a year after the guideline change.
- Estimated how many additional screenings the health centers need to conduct based on the increased number of eligible individuals.

WHAT WE FOUND

The impact of lowering the screening age for colorectal cancer:

- **More people need screening:** The number of screenings needed increased by 23%.
- **Not enough screenings for newly eligible adults:** Only 9.6% of adults ages 45–49 were up to date on screening, compared to 36% across all eligible age groups.

Areas for improvement:

- Community health centers should boost screening for ages 45–49 while ensuring older adults also have access.
- Interventions like text reminders and patient education before doctor visits can increase screening rates for all age groups.

Factors that impact colorectal cancer screening rates:

- The new guidelines added demand without additional resources, straining health centers already facing staffing and funding challenges.

What's next:

- More research is needed to find cost-effective solutions and increase colorectal cancer screening rates at health centers.

