Reviewer's report

Title: Patient Navigation to Promote Colorectal Cancer Screening among Community Health Center Patients: Results of a Pilot Study

Version: 1 Date: 7 December 2008

Reviewer: Lina Jandorf

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The question, regarding the impact of patient navigation was well defined. However, their methods seem to include two forms of intervention: a letter informing patients of the need for colorectal screening as well as patient navigation for the 75% reached.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? – A better understanding of the number of charts reviewed, to reach the 93 intervention patients should be included as well as how they determined the control cases.

3. Are the data sound? Yes

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Not exactly, since all of the patients at the intervention site seemed to have received a letter (no report of the number of letters returned) while only 75% were reached for navigation. It would be interesting to report the additive effect of navigation.

9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes – although not comments below.

Specific Essential Revisions:

1. Title is misleading since all intervention patients received a letter and only 75% were actually navigated.

2. Background: First paragraph – much of the dated reported are outdated. I would request more updated information, including CRC screening guidelines.

3. Background 2nd Paragraph – For the prior study, please explain where that took place – same community? Same health centers? Did then therefore bias the PCPs in anyway?

4. Background 3rd Paragraph – patient navigator are not always lay people – as evidenced both in the Chen reference and their own work. They are often health
educators.


6. Study Setting – I recommend definitions of the screening methods; why was age 52 selected, rather than 50?

7. Study Procedures – It would be helpful, to understand the findings, to know what the screening rates were prior to this study. In addition, how many charts were reviewed to identify both the intervention and control cases? Finally, I don’t understand why 14 (of the 38) intervention cases were deemed ineligible for outreach due to insurance status since free care was available. Please explain.

8. Intervention – More details on the navigators would be helpful, including their age and gender.

9. Statistical Methods – why was six months chosen? What was the current wait time for a colonoscopy? It may be that people were unable to get appointments?

10. Results – Table 1 – Given that they state a strength of the study was the diversity of the population, more details about race and language could be included in the table.

11. Results – Table 2 – It seems that for the 93 people in the intervention group, there were 2 forms of intervention. The first, the mailing about the importance of screening (and what percent of letters were returned as undeliverable?). Second, 75% received some level of navigation (including a message left) and a smaller proportion were actually navigated. I would like to see the impact of the multi-level intervention to better understand which of these three was most effective in increasing screening. Finally, even though the sample is relatively small, did they test for the effect of race, gender, language or insurance status? If not, state so and note as a limitation.

12. Discussion – Again, I would clarify which intervention was associated with an increased rate of screening. Also, the comment about undocumented immigrants being reluctant to return calls seems out of place. Do they know how many were undocumented? How many were immigrants? More details are suggested to be added to Table 1, if available.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests