INFOBulletin

Keeping health care providers informed of payment, policy or program changes

To: Family Physicians

Published By: Implementation Branch

Date Issued: October 12, 2010 **Bulletin #: 4519**

Re: ColonCancerCheck Letters to Patients

The ColonCancerCheck program will be sending new types of correspondence to patients.

1. Recall/Reminder Letters
2. Positive Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) Result Letters
3. Invitation Letters to Patients Turning 50 Years of Age

Background:

ColonCancerCheck, launched in April 2008, is Canada's first organized population-based colorectal cancer screening program. The goal of the program is to decrease mortality from colorectal cancer through early detection and treatment.

The program recommends screening with the ColonCancerCheck FOBT (green kit) every two years for average risk men and women 50 years of age and over. FOBT screening repeated every two years has been shown to reduce mortality from colorectal cancer by 16%[1]. For patients at increased risk who have a family history of the disease in a first-degree relative (parent, sibling or child), the program recommends screening with colonoscopy at age 50 or 10 years before the age of diagnosis of the affected relative, whichever is first.

Non-ColonCancerCheck FOBTs (red kit) continue to be available from community laboratories for diagnostic purposes, or for patients under the age of 50.

1. Recall/Reminder Letters

Effective August 2010, ColonCancerCheck began sending recall letters to past participants who are due to repeat biennial FOBT screening. The letter advises the patient that it is time to be re-screened for colorectal cancer and that they should talk to their family doctor about screening.

[1] Cancer Care Ontario, *ColonCancerCheck 2008 Program Report*, www.cancercare.on.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=1377&pageId=9851#.

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Recall letters are not sent to patients who have had other colorectal cancer screening activity within the past two years since completing an FOBT. This includes patients who have repeated the FOBT or had a colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy. The program will also not send recall letters to patients who were previously mailed an invitation letter as part of the ColonCancerCheck invitation pilot program in 2009/10, who have withdrawn from ColonCancerCheck correspondence or for whom the program does not have a valid mailing address.

Four months after the recall letter has been sent, the program will send a reminder letter to any participant who received a recall letter but did not submit an FOBT to a lab or complete other screening activity (e.g. colonoscopy, flexible sigmoidoscopy) within the four-month period.

2. Positive Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) Result Letters

Currently, ColonCancerCheck sends letters to patients with negative or indeterminate FOBT results as well as contacting unattached patients with positive FOBT results directly to ensure they have access to follow-up assessment services. Beginning in fall 2010, ColonCancerCheck will also send letters to attached patients who have a positive (abnormal) FOBT result. The letter will recommend that the patient contact their family physician to discuss their test result.

This correspondence is intended to ensure that patients are aware of their positive result and contact their family doctor for follow-up assessment. Family doctors have primary responsibility for ensuring that patients with abnormal test results receive appropriate follow-up care. Patients with positive FOBT results should be referred for colonoscopy. The Canadian Association of Gastroenterology guidelines recommend colonoscopy within eight weeks of a positive FOBT result[2]. Only 60% of participants with a positive FOBT result are receiving a colonoscopy within six months.

3. Invitation Letters to Patients Turning 50 Years of Age

In late 2010, ColonCancerCheck will begin sending letters to men and women turning 50 years of age to invite them to visit their family physician to discuss colorectal cancer screening. In 2010/11 only, invitation letters will also be sent to Ontarians turning 51 and 52 years of age; this is a one-time initiative to encourage people who have not participated in colorectal cancer screening since the program's launch in April 2008 to contact their family doctor to discuss screening.

Invitation letters are not sent to patients who have had colorectal cancer screening activity within the past five years, or a colonoscopy within the past 10 years. The program will also not send recall letters to patients who were previously mailed an invitation letter as part of the ColonCancerCheck invitation pilot program in 2009/10, who have withdrawn from ColonCancerCheck correspondence or for whom the program does not have a valid mailing address.

Should you have any questions, please contact ColonCancerCheck at 1-866-662-9233 or coloncancercheck@cancercare.on.ca. Further information on ColonCancerCheck is available at www.Ontario.ca/ColonCancerCheck.

Bulletins and Q's and A's are available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website http://www.health.gov.on.ca/.

[2] Paterson WG, Depew WT, Pare P, et al for the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology Wait Time Consensus Group. *Canadian consensus on medically acceptable wait times for digestive health care*. Canadian Journal of Gastroenterology Vol 20 No 6 June 2006.

Questions&Answers

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Re: ColonCancerCheck Letters to Patients

The ColonCancerCheck program will be sending new types of correspondence to patients. The following are answers to questions family physicians may have about this new correspondence.

Recall/Reminder Letters and Invitation Letters to Patients Turning 50 Years of Age

Q1. My office calls and sends letters to our patients who are eligible for colorectal cancer screening. If ColonCancerCheck is now sending recall and reminder letters, and will send invitation letters to patients turning 50 years of age, does this mean we no longer need to contact these patients for screening?

A1. Family physicians are encouraged to continue to contact patients who are eligible for colorectal screening and have not completed a ColonCancerCheck FOBT within the past two years. ColonCancerCheck correspondence will provide additional support to physicians in encouraging patients to participate in colorectal cancer screening.

Q2. If ColonCancerCheck is sending recall and reminder letters, and will send invitation letters to patients turning 50 years of age, can I claim the Colorectal Cancer Screening Management fee code (Q005A)?

A2. No, physicians will not be able to claim the Q005A fee code for letters sent from the ColonCancerCheck program. However, eligible Patient Enrolment Model physicians who contact enrolled patients for the purpose of scheduling an appointment for colorectal cancer screening may continue to submit the Q005A fee code. Please refer to Bulletin 4482, issued July 22, 2008, for further information on the prescribed methods for contacting enrolled patients and conditions for claiming this fee.

Positive Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) Result Letters

Q3. Will my patients with positive FOBT results receive a letter from ColonCancerCheck before my office has received the test results from the laboratory?

A3. Letters to patients with positive FOBT results will be mailed by ColonCancerCheck approximately two weeks after the laboratory sends the test result to the physician who ordered the test.

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Q4. What does a positive FOBT result mean?

A4. ColonCancerCheck defines a positive FOBT result as blood detected in at least one of the three samples in the FOBT kit. For ColonCancerCheck branded FOBT kits, the overall kit positivity rate is about 4.5%. This rate has remained relatively stable over the past 18 months.

General Questions about ColonCancerCheck

Q5. How does ColonCancerCheck obtain information about my patients?

A5. Under the *Personal Health Information and Protection Act, 2004* (PHIPA), the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has authorized Cancer Care Ontario to compile and maintain the Colorectal Cancer Screening Registry. The Registry collects personal health information about patients who may be eligible for colorectal cancer screening. Under PHIPA, the registry is permitted to collect personal health information to assist with or improve the provision of health care.

Q6. What do I tell my patients who don't want to receive correspondence from the ColonCancerCheck program?

A6. Patients may choose, at any time, not to be contacted by ColonCancerCheck. If the individual does not wish to be contacted by ColonCancerCheck, he or she must:

- Call ColonCancerCheck's toll-free number 1-866-662-9233 to make this request; or
- Complete a ColonCancerCheck Withdrawal from Correspondence Form, available at www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ms/coloncancercheck/docs/ccc_WithdrawalfromCorrespondenceForm.pdf, and mail or fax it to the program (contact information is provided on the form).

Q7. Can I provide ColonCancerCheck FOBTs (green kits) to patients under 50 years of age?

A7. ColonCancerCheck recommends screening for asymptomatic patients aged 50 and over who are at average risk of colorectal cancer using the ColonCancerCheck FOBT. This is consistent with clinical guidelines[1].

When a physician provides a ColonCancerCheck FOBT to a patient under 50 years of age, the test will be processed by the laboratory, and test results will be sent to the physician. However, the patient will not receive a recall letter in two years advising the patient that it is time to be re-screened for colorectal cancer.

Non-ColonCancerCheck FOBTs (red kits) continue to be available from community laboratories for diagnostic purposes, or for patients under the age of 50.

Bulletins and Q's and A's are available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website http://www.health.gov.on.ca/.

[1] Canadian Task Force on Preventive Healthcare. *Colorectal cancer screening: recommendation statement.* Canadian Medical Association Journal 2001; 165(2):206-208.