

MNGI Digestive Health Responds to NEJM Colonoscopy study

The New England Journal of Medicine Article - NordICC Trial: Effect of Colonoscopy Screening on Risks of Colorectal Cancer and Related Death - October 9, 2022

MINNEAPOLIS, MN -

After reviewing data from the Nordic-European Initiative on Colorectal Cancer (NordICC) trial and the commentary published with it, MNGI Digestive Health (MNGI) believes the subsequent headlines and media coverage has been misleading and also failed to convey the study's limitations, which poses a risk to public health. For that reason, this statement provides important clarifications and reminders about colonoscopy for colorectal cancer (CRC) screening.

MNGI's President and CEO, Dr. Scott Ketover had this to say, *"MNGI Digestive Health and its physicians are concerned about the messages that have been shared by the media this week. Even though the initial headlines were potentially detrimental to colonoscopy screening in the short term, MNGI along with other healthcare providers and public health advocates, will use this opportunity to drive more public conversations about the importance of colonoscopy and being screened early for colorectal cancer. For a number of reasons, the data from the NordICC trial does not parallel the colorectal cancer screening and prevention work that is being done in the United States. Colorectal cancer is deadly but also highly preventable and Americans should not be deterred from their screening colonoscopy. A colonoscopy by a highly skilled gastroenterologist is still the best and most trusted way to save lives and why it is recommended for adults beginning at age 45. Even in this study, patients who did undergo a colonoscopy had a 31 percent decrease in the risk of colorectal cancer as compared to those who were not screened, which points to the value of continued screening. Again, there's nothing in this study that indicates a change in direction for Americans or their health care providers. Colonoscopies save lives and the earlier detection the better."*

The study did reinforce some key items that patients and referring providers should be reminded of -

- **Colonoscopy saves lives and remains the gold standard for colorectal cancer (CRC) screening.** It is the only screening test that **DETECTS** and also PREVENTS cancer, through the removal of precancerous polyps during the procedure. That polyp removal cannot be accomplished with any other screening method. In addition, colonoscopy does not require the patient to do more than one test, making it the best and most proven method for CRC screening.
- **A skilled and experienced gastroenterologist performing the colonoscopy makes a difference.** In the NordICC trial, almost one-third of the endoscopists had an adenoma detection rate (ADR) below the recommended minimum threshold of 25 percent, which means they are more prone to miss polyps that may become cancer in the future. A recent study using data from the GI Quality Improvement Consortium (GIQUIC) showed the average adenoma detection rate for screening colonoscopies in the United States is 39 percent. This reminds us that quality matters and choosing a highly-rated gastroenterologist to perform the colonoscopy is important.
 - Why does ADR matter? The adenoma detection rate (ADR) is a quality indicator that is linked with the prevention of colorectal cancer and how often precancerous polyps

are found during colonoscopy. A higher ADR generally means a lower risk of cancer within the next 5 to 10 years after the screening.

- MNGI Digestive Health gastroenterologists consistently have rates even higher than the targets suggested by the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE). Based on 2021 data, **MNGI's ADR was 61.50% for males as compared to the ASGE benchmark of 30%. MNGI's ADR was 49.50% for females as compared to the ASGE benchmark of 20%.**
 - ◆ For 2022, MNGI's ADR performance is anticipated to improve further due to addition of artificial intelligence technology (Medtronic's GI Genius device) during colonoscopy procedures.
- **Screening colonoscopy is effective when it is used.** In the NordICC trial, less than half (42%) of patients who were invited for a colonoscopy actually followed through and had the procedure. For those that did, colonoscopy was shown to reduce the risk of colorectal cancer by 31 percent and cut the risk of dying of colorectal cancer by 50 percent. Other studies have shown that colonoscopy could reduce the incidence of colorectal cancer by more than 50 percent and reduce the risk of dying of colorectal cancer by as much as 68 percent. The study reinforced that not getting a colonoscopy is of no value.
- **Continued education and discussion are critically important.** This study actually reinforces the good work that has been done in the United States to raise awareness, educate and openly discuss these important screening recommendations with patients and the public at large. In the NordICC trial, almost 60% of the people who were invited to get a colonoscopy failed to do so. This is not surprising since messages encouraging screening for colorectal cancer are newer in Europe and colonoscopy is not as widely discussed. Even in the United States, plenty of barriers remain and this study serves as a reminder that hard work and education is still needed.
 - In the U.S., more messaging is also needed to communicate the recent change in recommended screening age. After examining the importance of CRC screening in the U.S. population, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommended that Americans begin screening for colorectal cancer at the age of 45 rather than 50, to help detect cancer in earlier stages and prevent cancer at younger ages.

About MNGI Digestive Health:

MNGI Digestive Health is a nationally recognized leader in gastroenterology diagnosis, quality and care. The locally owned, physician-led practice is committed to improving patient health and specializes in providing comprehensive gastrointestinal (GI) specialty care and procedures for adult and pediatric patients with digestive system disorders. MNGI has several convenient outpatient endoscopy centers and clinics located in communities throughout the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, serving patients from across the Upper Midwest. Additional information can be found at <https://www.mngi.com>