Increasing Adherence to Colorectal Cancer Screening Tests in a Disadvantaged Population

PURPOSE
The purpose of this quality improvement project was to assess the impact of a nurse patient navigator on colorectal cancer screening adherence rates among unscreened patients of a community health center.

BACKGROUND
Screening remains low in the uninsured and minority population. Enhancing the patient’s knowledge on the benefits to screening and addressing barriers is necessary. Improving screening rates meets the recommendation for early detection by the American Cancer Society and care effectiveness by the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

METHODOLOGY
The pilot project focused on unscreened patients 50-55 years of age presenting for a physical exam (n=56). Each patient received a Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) kit along with an educational pamphlet and patient centered instructions. The navigator made telephone contact three days after the appointment to address barriers. The primary outcome was submission of the kit within six weeks of the navigator intervention.

RESULTS
The project demonstrated a higher center HEDIS measure percentage (73%), physician ordering compliance (88%), and kit submission following the application of the educational tools. An improvement was observed with the kit delivery process. No changes in kit submission rates were observed from the navigator intervention.

IMPLICATIONS
Emphasis should be placed on the application of evidence based educational tools which promote screening awareness, patient engagement, and informed decision making. Further evaluation is warranted to assess the impact of the navigator on additional screening measures for ambulatory care.