Latinos Less Likely to Be Screened for Colon Cancer

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Latinos are lagging behind on getting a health screening that could save their lives—they're far less likely than their white counterparts to be screened for color cancer, according to research published in the journal *Cancer* and reported by Reuters Health.

For the study, researchers from the University of California at Los Angeles conducted a telephone survey of more than 30,000 adults younger than 65 and living in California. Participants were asked how recently they had been screened for breast cancer and colon cancer and whether anyone in their family had ever had either of those cancers (which would have increased the participants' risk).

Researchers found that while Latina women were regularly screened for breast cancer, Latinos as a group were not opting for color cancer screening. Using U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Guidelines to measure screening (which advise colon cancer screening every five or 10 years for men and women 50 and older), researchers found that only 51 percent of Latinos with no family history of the colon cancer were screened according to guidelines versus 71 percent who had a relative with colon cancer.

Furthermore, researchers found that compared with average-risk whites, Latinos with no family history of colon cancer were 26 percent less likely to be screened. And Latinos with such a family history were 72 percent less likely than whites with a family history to meet the recommended guidelines.

"Our troubling finding was that knowledge of their family history of colon cancer did not close the Latino-white gap in screening but actually widened the disparity," the researchers wrote in the journal Cancer.

Researchers explained that the disparity may be due to language and cultural barriers, fear, anxiety, the challenges of relaying screening messages to the Latino community and the simple fact that Latinos underestimate their risk of cancer.

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