

Rural Residents with Disabilities Less Likely to get Colon Cancer Screening

Early detection of colorectal cancer can save lives. Recommended preventive screenings include colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, or fecal blood testing at around the age of 50. These screenings can help catch problems before they develop into cancer and diagnose existing disease at an earlier stage, which may improve treatment outcomes, including chances of survival. Unfortunately, many individuals do not obtain recommended preventive screening for colorectal cancer, with the numbers being greater in rural areas. A recent study shows that rural-dwelling individuals with physical, cognitive, or hearing and vision disabilities are even more likely to miss out on needed preventive screenings and care when compared to those living in urban areas. Specifically, in a study of over 11,000 people aged 50-64 living with a disability, only 55 percent of rural residents had ever been screened for colorectal cancer. Several factors may contribute to this finding including long distances to the nearest healthcare clinic and availability of primary care providers and specialists. For those with a disability, simply obtaining transportation may be an issue as there is often a lack of transportation services in outlying areas which may make it even harder for those individuals to gain access to care.

For more information, please visit: www.reuters.com/article/email/idUSKBN0FC23H20140707 ◆

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Did You Know?

- Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in the U.S.
- Recommended screening could prevent at least 60% of these deaths annually.
- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends regular screening for colorectal cancer using high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy beginning at age 50 years and continuing until age 75.
- Screening tests can find polyps, so they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening tests also can find colorectal cancer early. When it is found early, the chance of being cured is good.
- Women Veterans are among the fastest-growing group of Veterans, making up approximately 7% of the total Veteran population.
- Female Veterans' services include primary and specialty care, mental health, residential, and reproductive services.
- The VA Center for Women Veterans was established in 1994 to monitor and coordinate healthcare and benefits for female Veterans (www.va.gov/WOMENVET/index.asp).
- A women Veterans' hotline has been established to answer questions about VA services and resources (1-855-VA-WOMEN). ◆



Togus VA Opens New Clinic for Women's Health Care in Augusta, Maine

In Spring 2014, the Togus VA Medical Center of Maine opened a new, 2.2 million dollar Women's Health clinic offering primary care, mental health services, obstetrics and gynecology, and military sexual trauma counseling. Women Veterans make up approximately 7 percent of the Veteran population and are increasing in number as soldiers return from conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. VA has recognized the importance of increasing access to services for female Veterans in an effort to fight the stigma surrounding female Veteran status. Specifically, women who didn't see combat or served in supporting roles may not be viewed as "real" Veterans, which may make them hesitant to use VA services.

The Director of the VA Maine Healthcare System, Ryan Lilly, believes in the importance of having a separate clinic for female Veterans stating, "Female Veterans often have had a different experience in their military service from their male counterparts. They haven't always been treated well, frankly. One of the things that's important to them when they come to a VA facility is to be treated with respect and to have a private space they go to."

For more information, please visit: www.pressherald.com/2014/07/01/togus-opens-new-clinic-for-womens-health-care/ ◆

