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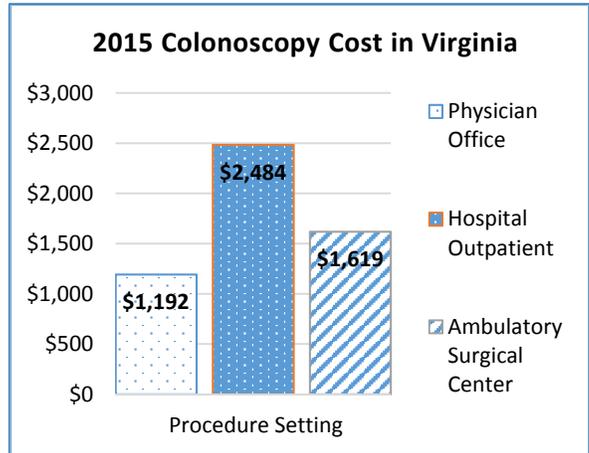
Press Contact:

Virginia Health Information
 Shanikka Richardson, Communications Assistant
 Phone: 804-612-8185, Toll Free: 1-877-VHI-INFO
 Web Site: www.vhi.org

**Colorectal Cancer Rates Rising Among Young Adults;
 Could Cost of Preventive Services Be a Factor?**

Richmond, VA – According to a recent Colorectal Cancer Incidence Patterns study published by the American Cancer Society, colon and rectal cancer rates are rising nationwide for adults under the age of 55. The study suggests that someone born in 1990 would have twice the risk of colon cancer and four times the risk of rectal cancer at the same age had they been born in 1950. Of individuals with a colorectal cancer diagnosis identified in Virginia’s All Payer Claims Database (APCD), 14% are under the age of 50.

While the study does not pinpoint an exact cause behind the national increase, American Cancer Society researcher Rebecca Siegel suggests that a telling factor could be the decision among uninsured younger adults to avoid or forego preventive health services due to cost. Of the 878,000 uninsured Virginians, 39.3% are between the ages of 19 and 34, according to Virginia Health Care Foundation’s 2016 Profile of Virginia’s Uninsured. For this age group, the average charge of an inpatient hospitalization for colorectal cancer is \$63,404 with an average length of stay of 7.2 days, according to information from VHI’s Patient Level Database. In Virginia, the statewide average cost for a colonoscopy ranges between \$1,200 and \$2,500 based on procedure setting; physician office, hospital outpatient or ambulatory surgical center (available at <http://vhi.org/healthcarepricing/>).



Intimidating costs may cause the uninsured to, “avoid seeing a doctor until they simply can’t ignore their symptoms any longer” says Siegel. Alternatively, 92% of Virginians enrolled in commercial HMOs between the ages of 20 and 44 reported visiting a doctor for preventive health services (based on VHI’s Compare HMOs report); cost not being a deterrent.

Colorectal cancer screening is typically recommended for patients beginning at age 50. In VHI’s 2015 Compare HMOs report (available at http://www.vhi.org/hmo_compare.asp), 64% of insured Virginians between the ages of 50 and 80 reported having colorectal cancer screenings. In light of the new study, advances into less invasive (and less costly) tests may create an opportunity to increase colorectal cancer prevention efforts among younger adults. However, American Cancer Society researchers Siegel, Chang and Welch do not think that major changes to testing is imminent without more research.

VHI is a nonprofit health data organization collecting and making available a wide variety of health information to assist businesses, consumers, healthcare providers and others in making better healthcare decisions and to improve the quality of care. To find the latest updates on healthcare data and statistics, find and like VHI on Facebook at www.facebook.com/vahealth or visit www.vhi.org for more information.

[Virginia Health Information](http://www.vhi.org)

102 N. 5th Street, Richmond VA 23219
 Phone (804) 643-5573
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