

Cancer Screening Rates Lower Among Those with Fatalistic Attitudes

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- Even with no financial cost, rates are lower if negative attitudes persist.
- Researchers tested rates of colorectal cancer screening in England.
- Negative attitudes may be combated with psycho-educational interventions.

PHILADELPHIA — Even if health care is free, colorectal cancer screening rates among those without financial means are still low, and results of a new study suggest that may be due to an idea psychologists call cancer fatalism.

Anne Miles, Ph.D., a lecturer in psychology at Birbank, University of London, said those who felt that the cancer screenings wouldn't help, or they were going to die of cancer anyway, often failed to comply with screening recommendations.

Her findings are published in a recent issue of *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

"In England, the screenings are free and the subsequent health treatments are free as well, yet people of lower socioeconomic status still do not get screened. We wanted to find out what else was going on," she said.

Miles and her colleagues analyzed data from 529 adults aged 60 to 69 who had completed a series of surveys measuring their socio-economic status, self-rated health and rate of cancer fatalism. These measures were tested against the rate of fecal occult blood testing.

They found that men and women with higher socioeconomic status, better self-rated health and lower cancer fatalism were 56 percent more likely to undergo colorectal cancer screening by fecal occult blood testing.

Miles said cancer fatalism can be treated and managed if properly identified.

"There is clearly something else going on here besides costs. We need to understand peoples' attitudes toward screening," said Miles. "If they think it won't help, they won't do it, even if it's free."

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cancer. Founded in 1907, the AACR is the world's oldest and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research. The membership includes 33,000 basic, translational and clinical researchers; health care professionals; and cancer survivors and advocates in the United States and more than 90 other countries. The AACR marshals the full spectrum of expertise from the cancer community to accelerate progress in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer through high-quality scientific and educational programs. It funds innovative, meritorious research grants, research fellowships and career development awards. The AACR Annual Meeting attracts more than 18,000 participants who share the latest discoveries and developments in the field. Special conferences throughout the year present novel data across a wide variety of topics in cancer research, treatment and patient care. The AACR publishes seven major peer-reviewed journals: *Cancer Discovery*; *Cancer Research*; *Clinical Cancer Research*; *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*; *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*; *Molecular Cancer Research*; and *Cancer Prevention Research*. AACR journals received 20 percent of the total number of citations given to oncology journals in 2010.

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