

## TRENDS IN MAILED FECAL IMMUNOCHEMICAL TEST OUTREACH RESPONSE RATES FROM 2018 TO 2022 IN A LARGE ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTER

Shailavi Jain MD<sup>1</sup>, Sarah Meshkat MHA<sup>2</sup>, Folasade P. May MD PhD MPhil<sup>1, 3, 4</sup>

(1) Department of Medicine, David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles, California; (2) Office of Population Health & Accountable Care, University of California, Los Angeles, California; (3) The Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases, Department of Medicine, David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles, California; (4) Division of Gastroenterology, Department of Medicine, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Los Angeles, California

**Abstract Society:** AGA

**Category:** Clinical Practice

**Subcategory:** COVID and Clinical Practice

**Character Limit:** 2900/2900 (with spaces)

**Submission Deadline:** Dec 1, 2022 8:59 PM PST

**Introduction:** Colorectal cancer (CRC) remains common and deadly despite national screening guidelines and multiple screening modalities. Screening rates declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the pandemic impacted health system CRC screening interventions, including mailed fecal immunochemical test (FIT) outreach. We aimed to evaluate trends in response rates to mailed FIT outreach in our health system before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methods:** The study was performed in a large academic health system in Los Angeles with over 420,000 primary care patients and over 50 primary care clinics. The health system has a biannual mailed FIT outreach program that was established in 2018. Every March and September, an electronic health record query is performed to identify average-risk primary care patients age 50 to 75 who are overdue for CRC screening. FIT kits are then mailed to these individuals and the proportion of kits returned (response rate) is measured at 30, 60, and 90 days. For the present analyses, we calculated the response rate at 90 days for each mailing cycle between Fall 2018 and Spring 2022. Of note, mailed FIT outreach continued in our health system during the Los Angeles County COVID-19 lockdowns (March 2020 - January 2021). Screening colonoscopies were not offered between 3/18/2020 and 5/5/2020, during which time FIT was the primary screening method. Patients age 45-49 were not included in mailed FIT outreach during the study period.

**Results:** An average of 3117 (s.d.= 315.7) patients were mailed a FIT in each cycle (range 2633-3640), and there were 8 cycles in the study period (Table). The response rate was highest for the 3/2020 and 3/2021 cycles (23%) and lowest for the 3/2019 cycle (12%). There was an early increase in the response rate after the 3/2019 cycle, lasting until spring 2020. This period was followed by a steady and high response rate (22-23%) during the COVID-19 lockdowns (Figure). This highest response rate period was followed by lower response rates in the 2 cycles after the COVID-19 lockdowns (19% in 9/2021 and 21% in 3/2022). Of note, the largest number of overdue patients and highest volume mailing was in 3/2021 (3640 patients), at the end of the COVID-19 lockdowns.

**Discussion:** Patient response to mailed FIT outreach has varied over time. Increasing response rates in 2019 may be attributable to early refinements in the mailed FIT outreach materials and program. Mailed outreach volume and response rates were highest during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which we attribute to lack of access to colonoscopy and aggressive messaging to patients and providers in our health system to transition to non-colonoscopy CRC screening modalities. Future evaluations will assess whether non-colonoscopy screening remains prevalent in our health system as availability of screening colonoscopy increases again.

**Table: Number of patients and response rates for each mailed FIT outreach program cycle, 2018-2022**

Mailed FIT outreach cycle	Number of patients mailed a FIT kit	FIT kit return rate at 90 days (% returned)
9/2018	2,978	15%
3/2019	3,282	12%
9/2019	2,805	17%
3/2020	3,179	23%
9/2020	2,962	22%
3/2021	3,640	23%
9/2021	2,633	19%
3/2022	3,460	21%
Average for all cycles	3,117 (s.d.= 315.7)	19%

**Figure: Trends in response rates for the mailed FIT outreach program, 2018-2022**

