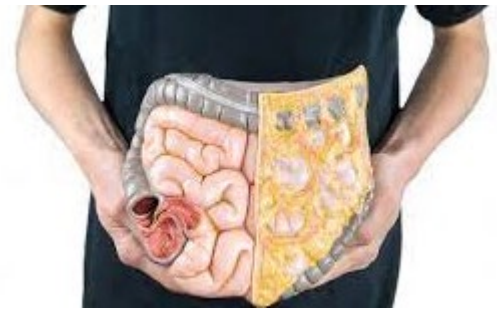


Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



NATIONAL VETERAN HEALTH EQUITY REPORT: COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING INFORMATION BRIEF

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INTRODUCTION

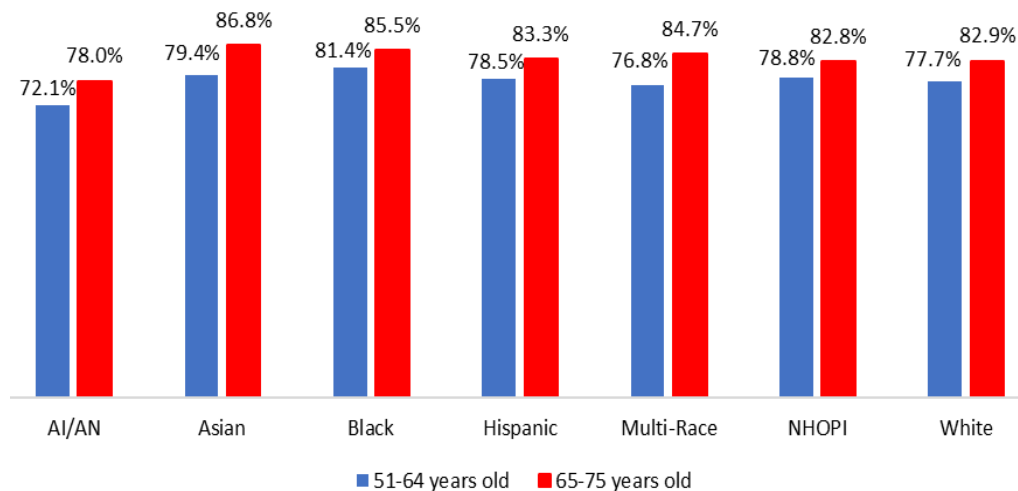
The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans.

The Office of Health Equity-QUERI Partnered Evaluation Center authored the National Veteran Health Equity Report (NVHER) 2021. It provides information regarding disparities in patient experiences and health care quality for Veterans who obtain health care services through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). One of the conditions highlighted in the NVHER are colorectal cancer (CRC) screening rates.

and prevention through screening reduces the risk of CRC-related poor health outcomes.

VA is recognized for achieving CRC screening rates that surpass the national benchmark of 80%. Many of the racial/ethnic CRC screening disparities that occur in healthcare settings throughout the United States do not exist in VA. In the VA, Hispanics and Black Veterans have similar or higher CRC screening rates than whites.

Percent of Veterans Receiving Colorectal Cancer Screening, by Race and Ethnicity



COLORECTAL CANCER

SCREENING HEALTH DISPARITIES

Colorectal, or colon, cancer is cancer that is found in either the colon or the rectum. Early detection



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BRINGING FIT TESTING INTO VETERANS' HOMES

While the VHA has historically had high CRC screening adherence, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly reduced the number of routine screening colonoscopies that could be completed. There are now approximately 1.6 million Veterans due for screening, and over 500,00 due for colonoscopy. To address this growing backlog, VHA clinicians identified that they needed population-level interventions to help save Veterans' lives.

In partnership with the National Gastroenterology Program Office, staff from the Sierra Pacific Network (VISN 21) are piloting a mailed FIT program at the Fresno and Las Vegas VA Health Care Systems. This program is designed to support, not replace, current CRC screening efforts. This FIT-first approach aims to increase CRC screening adherence, reduce costs, increase colonoscopy access for Veterans with the highest risk for CRC, and save lives.

This program is simple. Veterans at normal risk for CRC

are mailed a FIT kit to use in their home. Veterans then send samples directly to their local VA facility for analysis. Positive samples are then referred to the Veteran's primary care provider for appropriate follow-up.

So far, more than 6,000 Veterans have been offered screening. The initial results of this new initiative are promising. During the pilot at the Fresno VA Medical Center, 46.2% of Veterans returned their FIT kit, and 7.3%, tested positive. In Las Vegas 44.7% of Veterans have returned their FIT kit and 7.6%, have tested positive. Programs have also started at the San Francisco VA and Puget Sound VA, with plans to roll out other sites in California, Nevada, and Texas.

ARE YOU FIT?

What is FIT?
FIT is a colorectal cancer screening test that looks for microscopic blood in the stool.

- Colon cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer death in the US
- More Americans will die this year from colon cancer than were killed in action during the Vietnam War
- More than 1/2 of patients who die from colon cancer could have been saved by early screening
- A FIT test can be done in the comfort of your home and does not require a bowel preparation

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>