UNCHARTED TERRITORY: PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS FROM COLONOSCOPY SCREENING IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Introduction:

This study assessed the status of screening colonoscopies in the Dominican Republic and examined differences in findings based on age. While guidelines recommend starting screening at age 45, the current state of screening in this country remains unclear.

Methods and Procedures:

Preliminary retrospective analysis of medical records from patients who underwent screening colonoscopy at Santo Domingo's Hospital General de la Plaza de la Salud in the year 2022. We categorized patients by age brackets (equal or less than 45, >50) and collected data on polyp and malignancy prevalence and their locations. Descriptive statistics were employed to assess demographic characteristics. Furthermore, the prevalence of findings, with specific attention to their location within the bowel. Additionally, we compared cancer incidence between age groups, utilizing 50 years as the cutoff point.

Results:

- Total of 433 patients, 61.4% female.
- Around 21% had colonoscopies at or before age 45, and 70% were over 50 years of age.
- Polyps were found in 27.5%, with 2.1% having malignancies.
- The most common polyps were hyperplastic (22.6%), followed by tubular adenomas (2.8%).
- Advanced neoplasms were present in 7.2% of patients.
- The distal colon (splenic flexure onwards) accounted for 62.1% of the findings.
- There were no significant differences in advanced neoplasm prevalence by age (3.5% vs. 1.1%, p=0.238).
- Patients over 50 had a higher prevalence of proximal colon lesions (11.3% vs. 2.6%, p<0.001).
- Polyps were more common in patients over 50 (81% vs. <50, p<0.001).

Conclusions:

The Dominican Republic lacks a strong culture of prevention, resulting in a potential increase in the incidence of early-onset colorectal cancer. The hospital alone has an influx of over 70,000 patients the age appropriate for screening, yet the proportion of patients that get screened remains low.

We found advanced neoplasms in patients under 50, indicating a need for improved colorectal cancer screening and prevention efforts.



