

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Docs Overdo Surveillance Colonoscopies

Physicians appear to be performing surveillance colonoscopies at frequencies higher than those recommended by evidence-based medical guidelines, according to results of a survey conducted by the **National Cancer Institute**. Surveillance colonoscopies are follow-up colonoscopies given to patients who already have had a colorectal abnormality detected and removed.

For the lowest risk example, a patient diagnosed with only a small hyperplastic polyp, 54 percent of general surgeons and 24 percent of gastroenterologists surveyed recommended follow-up colonoscopies at least every five years. But medical guidelines don't recommend any follow-up colonoscopy for hyperplastic polyps because the presence of these polyps hasn't been shown to increase the risk of colorectal cancer, according to the report, which appeared in the August 17, 2004, *Annals of Internal Medicine*.