

**COLON SURGERY IN THE VAMC: WHAT IS STILL NEEDED IN THIS MILLENIUM?**

\*Bonebrake M, Ferguson J, Cullen J, Ephgrave K

VAMC Iowa City and U. Iowa Carver College of Medicine, Iowa City, IA

**Background:** For over a decade, veterans have enjoyed a high quality of healthcare within the VA system with an electronic medical record that facilitates reminders and clear guidelines for recommended health screening. We questioned whether operative experience for surgical trainees was being maintained in this era, as aggressive screening for colon polyps might diminish the number of colon resections needed by our predominantly older male patient population compared to the previous years with less effective colon screening. .

**Methods:** We used our NSQIP database to query for all colon resections for the last 4 years, in comparison with all cholecystectomies and the subset of inguinal herniorrhaphies entered into the NSQIP database.

**Results:** Inguinal herniorrhaphy was performed most commonly, with 267 in our NSQIP database, compared to 163 colon resections and 143 cholecystectomies. All 3 procedures had similar aged patient populations. The age range was 25-89, with a mean of 62.2 (SD 11.9) for herniorrhaphy, compared to a mean of 59 years (SD 12.6, range 24-86) for cholecystectomy, and 65 (SD 10.5, range 31-87) for colon resections. Right hemicolectomy was the most common resection, which was needed by 49% of these recent veterans. Sigmoidectomy was the next most common form of colon resection, needed by 24%. Less than 5% in the current era needed an abdomino-perineal resection. The mean number of colon resections /year for our institution from 2004-2008 was 40.7/year, which is increased from the early 90's (29/year) and late 90's (32.6/year).

**Conclusions:** Colon resections are increasing rather than decreasing in the current era of aggressive colonoscopy screening, despite the large number of polyps that can be removed endoscopically. Right hemicolectomy predominates over all other colon procedures. The patient population requiring colon resection in the VA does not differ from those requesting inguinal hernia repair or cholecystectomy.