

## Doctors Request Medicare Cover Lifesaving Test

(NAPSA)—A new, less invasive way to screen for colorectal cancer could help save thousands of lives—if more people could access it.

The test is a virtual colonoscopy, which doctors say is as effective as standard colonoscopy for detecting cancer but often easier on the patient. The problem is, while most major insurance companies cover the procedure, Medicare does not.

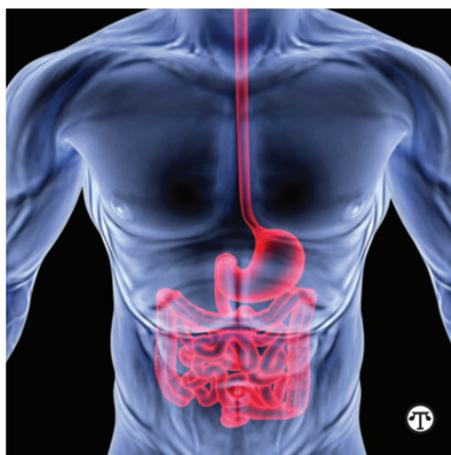
### An Answer

An American College of Radiology Imaging Network (ACRIN) study, published Feb. 23 in *Radiology*, found that virtual colonoscopy works as well in those ages 65 and older as it does in adults ages 50–64 and can serve as a frontline colorectal cancer screening tool for seniors. This is consistent with the ACRIN National CT Colonography Trial for patients 50 and older, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 2008. Now that there is proof that virtual colonoscopy works very well, including in those ages 65 and older, Colon Cancer Alliance and other experts say Medicare should cover seniors for this life-saving test.

CT colonography employs X-rays and virtual reality technology to produce three-dimensional images of the colon that permit a thorough and minimally invasive evaluation. It also requires no sedation.

### The Disease

Colorectal cancer is the third most frequently diagnosed cancer and second-leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Yet despite the known benefits of screening, studies indicate that millions of Americans age 50 and older are not being screened for the disease. The Centers for Dis-



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ease Control and Prevention estimates that up to 30,000 colorectal cancer deaths each year could be prevented if all those age 50 and older were screened regularly. Studies at National Military Medical Center have shown that availability of the virtual exam significantly boosted screening rates.

### The Doctor's Advice

As C. Daniel Johnson, M.D., of the Mayo Clinic, explained, "CT colonography is a perfectly viable colorectal cancer screening tool for the traditional Medicare-age population. Wider availability made possible by Medicare coverage of CT colonography would attract more seniors to be screened for colorectal cancer—which is so successfully treated when detected early. Making CT colonography more available to seniors ultimately could save lives."

### Further Information

Learn more at [www.acrin.org](http://www.acrin.org).