



Lessons Learned

Created by Patient Safety
to evaluate and improve the quality of health care.

Elimination of Inpatient Fecal Occult Blood Testing (FOBT)

Goal:

To ensure patient safety through evidence-based practice changes

Background:

FOBT was originally developed for outpatient colon cancer screening, and even for this indication has been replaced by newer more accurate screening modalities. Its use in the inpatient setting for evaluation of GI bleed has been examined in the literature and has shown to not only be ineffective, but also makes it more likely for patients to undergo unnecessary endoscopic procedures (and incur the increased risk that goes along with these procedures) as well as increase length of stay (LOS). A cross-sectional study at Highland Hospital (Oakland, California) showed decreased admissions and unnecessary endoscopic procedures after the removal of FOBT from ordering options. (Reference #3)

Next Steps:

In the coming weeks, we will remove both the FOBT materials and Epic ordering ability for this test in the inpatient setting. This has been a joint decision involving experts in Gastroenterology, Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine, Critical Care and Surgery, and all are in agreement with this change. We will also send other educational notices regarding this change.

In the outpatient setting, keep in mind there are other newer and more accurate screening methods for colon cancer, including FIT testing and Cologuard.

References:

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Conclusion:

Our aim to keep our patients safe necessitates that we re-analyze our practices in light of current research. By eliminating FOBT, we will ensure our patients do not undergo unnecessary procedures and have longer length of hospital stay.