Multi-Cancer Screening Tests Have Potential for Catching Cancers Sooner

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In 2021, it is estimated that approximately 1.9 million cancer diagnoses will be made, and an estimated 608,570 people will die from the disease.[1] Many of these deaths and the costs associated with later stage diagnoses could be prevented if more cancers were caught early. That is why screening and early detection are key priorities for ACS CAN.

Multi-Cancer Screening Tests Can Catch More Cancers Early

Currently, the lack of screening for many types of cancer means that these cancers are detected at later stages when treatments are limited, and outcomes are generally poorer. Newer, innovative multi-cancer screening technology has the potential to detect more cancers at earlier stages. Several private and academic entities are currently engaged in research, including advanced clinical trials, to develop multi-cancer early detection blood-based tests.

Blood-based multi-cancer early detection tests are designed to complement, not replace, existing early detection tests. Published data indicate that some of these tests can screen for more than 50 cancers at the same time, including some rare cancers. The companies engaged in multi-cancer screening have received breakthrough device designation for their tests and are pursuing FDA approval.

Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act Would Enhance Medicare Screening

Because the risk of cancer increases with age, Medicare beneficiaries age 65 and older are especially vulnerable. According to the most recent data from the National Cancer Institute, the median age of a cancer diagnosis is 66 years.[2] In fact, 60% of people who have cancer are 65 or older.[3]

Currently, Medicare covers early detection tests for breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, and prostate cancers. The *Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act* would potentially expand access to cancer screenings in Medicare. The bill would allow the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to initiate an evidence-based coverage process for a multi-cancer screening test following FDA approval. The bill would also give the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) authority to cover new multi-cancer technology in the future, without the need for additional legislation. This will provide CMS the authority to create coverage parameters such as patient and test criteria through the National Coverage Determination (NCD) process. The process could ensure that Medicare beneficiaries do not experience unacceptable delays in access to multi-cancer early detection.

Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Could Help Reduce Cancer Disparities

The availability of multi-cancer screening tests has the potential to address cancer mortality disparities by detecting more cancers earlier in more people. Overall cancer mortality rates have been declining for more than two decades in the United States, but racial, socioeconomic and geographic disparities persist. For example, cancer is the leading cause

[1] American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2021*. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society; 2021. Available at: https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2021/cancer-facts-and-figures-2021.pdf

[2] National Cancer Institute. Available at: https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/age

[3] https://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/older-adults/aging-and-cancer#:~:text=Age%20is%20the%20greatest%20risk,cancer%20are%2065%20or%20older.

of death for Hispanic, Asian American and Native American persons, and survival rates for Black patients are lower than white patients for every type of cancer except that of the pancreas.[4] Effective screening tools exist for cancer of the breast, cervix, colon, rectum, and lung, but barriers have led to sub-optimal screening rates. Cancer disparities occur mostly because of barriers to high quality cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment due to inequities in employment, wealth, education, housing, and standards of living.

A simple blood test may be more accessible and acceptable to patients, thereby extending screening opportunities to traditionally underserved communities. The ability to screen for multiple cancers at one time could help to detect more cancers at earlier stages when these cancers are responsive to treatment. Reducing cancer disparities can only be achieved if there is equitable access to the test in underserved communities.

ACS CAN Position

ACS CAN supports the *Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act* to provide Medicare coverage of screening tests that are FDA approved. Cancer screening and early detection are key priorities for ACS CAN.

[4] American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2021. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2021. Available at: https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2021/cancer-facts-and-figures-2021.pdf