

Preventive Care in Gastroenterology: The Nurse's Perspective

Diana Saranto*

Department of Nursing Science, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

Mini Review

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*For Correspondence

Diana Saranto, Department of Nursing Science, University of Turku, Turku, Finland

E-mail: dianasarantods@gmail.com

Abstract

Preventive care plays a crucial role in maintaining gastrointestinal health and preventing serious conditions such as colorectal cancer, inflammatory bowel disease and gastrointestinal infections. In the realm of gastroenterology, nurses serve as frontline advocates for preventive care, offering education, screenings and interventions that can make a significant difference in patient outcomes. Preventive care stands as a cornerstone in the field of gastroenterology, emphasizing proactive measures to maintain digestive health, detect issues early and reduce the risk of serious gastrointestinal conditions. From lifestyle interventions to regular screenings, a multifaceted approach guided by medical professionals ensures that individuals can enjoy optimal gastrointestinal well-being.

Keywords: Gastroenterology, Preventive care, Gastrointestinal health

INTRODUCTION

Gastroenterology nurses are integral members of the healthcare team, contributing their expertise to various aspects of preventive care. One of their primary responsibilities is patient education. Nurses educate individuals about healthy lifestyle choices, such as maintaining a balanced diet, staying hydrated and engaging in regular physical activity—all of which contribute to digestive health. They also provide guidance on avoiding risk factors for gastrointestinal conditions, such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and poor dietary habits. Screening for gastrointestinal diseases is another essential component of preventive care. Nurses conduct screenings for conditions such as colorectal cancer, utilizing tools like fecal occult blood tests, colonoscopies and sigmoidoscopies^[1,2]. By identifying precancerous lesions or early-stage tumors, nurses facilitate prompt intervention, potentially saving lives through early detection and treatment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Encouraging patients to undergo recommended screenings can be challenging, as many individuals may feel anxious or apprehensive about the procedure. Gastroenterology nurses play a pivotal role in promoting screening compliance by offering empathetic support and addressing patients' concerns. They take the time to explain the purpose of the screening, discuss the procedure in detail and alleviate fears by providing information about sedation options and potential discomfort. In addition to providing emotional support, nurses ensure that patients understand the importance of adherence to screening guidelines. They emphasize the benefits of early detection and emphasize that preventive measures can significantly reduce the risk of developing serious gastrointestinal conditions. By fostering open communication and building trust with patients, nurses empower individuals to take control of their digestive health and prioritize preventive screenings.

Effective preventive care in gastroenterology requires collaboration among healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners, dietitians and other members of the multidisciplinary team. Nurses work collaboratively with colleagues to develop comprehensive care plans tailored to each patient's needs. They communicate screening results, coordinate follow-up appointments and ensure continuity of care throughout the screening process^[3,4]. Moreover, nurses engage in community outreach initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of preventive care in gastroenterology. They participate in health fairs, educational seminars and outreach programs to educate the public about the significance of early detection and encourage proactive health behaviors. A fundamental aspect of preventive care in gastroenterology revolves around adopting and maintaining healthy lifestyle habits.

DISCUSSION

Nurses, physicians and other healthcare providers play pivotal roles in educating patients about the importance of dietary choices, regular exercise and avoiding habits detrimental to digestive health, such as excessive alcohol consumption and

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smoking. Encouraging a diet rich in fiber, fruits, vegetables and lean proteins while minimizing intake of processed foods and saturated fats can significantly lower the risk of gastrointestinal issues such as constipation, diverticulitis and Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD). Regular screenings are essential for detecting gastrointestinal conditions early, when they are most treatable. Gastroenterology professionals advocate for screening protocols tailored to individual risk factors and age groups. For instance, screening for colorectal cancer typically begins at age 45 or earlier for those with a family history or other risk factors^[5,6]. Screening methods may include colonoscopies, fecal occult blood tests and stool DNA tests. Similarly, screening for conditions like *Helicobacter pylori* infection, hepatitis B and C and celiac disease can aid in early diagnosis and intervention, preventing complications and improving outcomes.

Vaccination against certain gastrointestinal infections constitutes another crucial aspect of preventive care. Hepatitis A and B vaccines, for example, protect against viral hepatitis, which can lead to chronic liver disease if left untreated. Additionally, vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV) helps prevent HPV-related cancers, including some types of anal and oropharyngeal cancers. By promoting vaccination initiatives and ensuring widespread access to vaccines, healthcare providers contribute to the prevention of infectious diseases with gastrointestinal manifestations. Empowering patients with knowledge about digestive health and preventive measures is paramount. Gastroenterology professionals, including nurses and physicians, engage in patient education initiatives to raise awareness about risk factors, symptoms of gastrointestinal conditions and the importance of seeking timely medical attention. Providing clear, accessible information about screening options, dietary recommendations and lifestyle modifications enables individuals to make informed decisions and take an active role in preserving their digestive well-being.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of gastroenterology, preventive care is paramount for promoting digestive wellness and reducing the burden of gastrointestinal diseases. Gastroenterology nurses play a vital role in delivering preventive care services, offering education, conducting screenings and fostering collaboration to enhance patient outcomes. By embracing their role as advocates for preventive care, nurses empower individuals to prioritize their digestive health and embrace proactive measures that can lead to a lifetime of wellness.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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