

## **Colorectal cancer stage at diagnosis and area socioeconomic characteristics in New Jersey**

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Despite effective screening methods, research suggests consistently higher rates of late stage colorectal cancer (CRC) among persons living in low socioeconomic areas compared to those living in affluent areas. This population-based study evaluated the association between area-based socioeconomic measures (ABSMs) and CRC stage at diagnosis in New Jersey. Cases of CRC among persons 50 years and older, diagnosed from 2000-2005, were obtained from the New Jersey State Cancer Registry. Associations between census tract-level ABSMs and CRC stage at diagnosis were evaluated using logistic regression and geographic variation assessed using a spatial scan statistic. After adjusting for covariates, including individual-level health insurance, ABSMs were significantly associated with stage at diagnosis. As area socioeconomic conditions worsened, the odds of being diagnosed at a late stage increased. While increasing CRC screening services for all New Jersey populations is warranted, this study suggests that persons living in low socioeconomic areas could benefit the most from enhanced CRC education, screening efforts, and guided interventions.

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