Factors Influencing Patient Choice of Colon Imaging Tests

To the Editor:

I read with great interest the findings of Bosworth et al from their prospective comparison of patient experience with colon imaging tests.1 Although their study used the numeric rating scale (NRS) similar to that of Steine and Kim et al for the assessment of pain, their representation of the scale is different.2,3 For Steine and Kim et al, lower scores indicate little or no pain, and higher ones indicate extreme pain. Bosworth et al used the 5-point NRS where lower scores indicate agreement, higher scores indicate disagreement, and middle scores indicate neutrality. Interpreting these types of numeric responses in the context of pain can be difficult for the subjects and confound study results. It may even pose a greater challenge to the cognitively impaired elderly patients who might have been part of this study.4 The presence of pain can be assessed by a “yes” or “no” response and the severity of pain by a progressive rating scale. In neither situation is there a place for a “neutral” score.

In addition, the same bowel preparation was used for both computed tomographic colonography and colonoscopy. However, the data presented in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that subjects were asked about the unpleasantness of the preparation as if it were different for the 2 procedures.

Bosworth et al postulated that pain and discomfort played a greater role than other variables in the acceptability of various colon imaging tests. In contrast, Kim et al found that other factors, including comfort and dignity, were more important to the patients.3 Preference for a particular imaging modality is not only influenced by personal experience but also by the amount of information given to the patient, as demonstrated by Angtuaco et al.5 In summary, the acceptance of a test procedure depends on the test-related outcome that is most important to the patient and the depth of information provided by the caregiver.

Bamidele A. Adesunloye, MD
Morehouse School of Medicine
Atlanta, Ga

doi:10.1016/j.amjmed.2006.10.020

References