Patients' perspective - written testimonials from physician-patients and oral accounts presented by patients in person

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The purpose of the narrative is to review the comments provided by physician-patients related to the option of unsedated colonoscopy and to understand the factors contributing to acceptance of unsedated colonoscopy for CRC screening. The first two testimonials have recently been published¹. The third was located by Google search of "sedation-free colonoscopy"².

Dr. Chang (Martin Boyer Professor of Medicine, University of Chicago) (Chicago, IL, USA): "I have now had about four colonoscopies, all unsedated, following the finding of a malignant polyp. Each was uneventful and easily tolerated. In every instance, the procedure was performed by a skilled colonoscopist who was judicious with insufflation and navigation. The duration of the entire procedure was in fact shorter than sedated colonoscopy because detailed preparation and recovery periods were not required. I was able to return to work immediately. My positive experience with unsedated colonoscopy can be attributed to two factors. First, each procedure was performed by a skilled endoscopist. Second, my state of mind - I knew what to expect and experienced minimal anxiety during the procedure."

Dr. Schapiro (Clinical Professor Emeritus, UCLA; former President of the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy) (Encino, USA): "Due to my strong family history of colon cancer I have had eight colonoscopies during the past 30 or so years and seven of these have been unsedated. I have also performed many thousands of colonoscopies, a small percentage of which have not used sedation. I am a firm believer that unsedated colonoscopy is a safe and effective

approach that is vastly underutilized. The problem as I see it however resides first of all at the beginning training level where (at least in this country) sedated colonoscopy is the standard of practice. Not only does this hinder the unsedated approach, but does not allow the early development of "painless" colonoscopy because technique (loop removal) is less emphasized. The vast number of community colonoscopists gets by with discomfort by forming larger loops than are required for unsedated colonoscopy. I feel that the concept of unsedated colonoscopy needs to be part of the beginning training experience and then patients offered this as the primary alternative by physicians who believe in their ability to offer "painless" colonoscopy. There are of course other obstacles mostly related to patient's preconceived fear of rectal intubation. I feel that will be overcome with proper education of the lay population."

Based on Google search of "sedation-free colonoscopy", the following essay dated February 18th, 2009 by M. Brian Fennerty, MD, Professor of Medicine, Section Chief of Gastroenterology, Department of Internal Medicine Oregon Health and Science University was identified - Sedation-Free Colonoscopy: Why Isn't It the Standard?² "This Saturday's Wall Street Journal featured an intriguing article on sedation-free colonoscopy³, which is standard in Europe and Asia but rarely done in the U.S. One could argue that Americans are just 'weenies,' but I think the blame rests solely with us doctors. Sedation-free colonoscopy is successful in most who try it (I did!), but it does require a more careful exam to ensure that patients

are comfortable. Over-distension, looping, and other problems that can cause pain must be avoided, and that means the doctor must spend more time and perform more maneuvers during each procedure. And therein lies the rub. Even though sedation-free colonoscopy is safer and cheaper for patients, most gastroenterologists already feel rushed when they see patients and don't want to take the time to even broach the subject of sedation-free colonoscopy, let alone actually perform it. What's my recommendation? Discuss the availability and benefits of sedation-free colonoscopy with all your patients, and let's let Americans know to ask for it. It's a better way to get the exam - and you can even drive yourself home that day!"

The following are transcripts of patient testimonials provided in person at the time of the symposium.

Mr. W, a patient who has undergone unsedated colonoscopy, was part of the on demand sedation colonoscopy study and received water colonoscopy. "It is great that I had this opportunity to speak to you regarding my experience. I was contacted by one of the nurses two days ago and asked if I would like to speak about my recent experience with the colonoscopy. I had a previous history of surgery for a pilonidal cyst and I received sedation. I have to stay an extra 2 hours after my procedure and I can't feel my legs because of the medications they gave me. It was a very uncomfortable feeling. I lost a whole day because of the effect of the medications. When I have to undergo my colonoscopy, I was informed

that I have the option to undergo the procedure with no medications. I was initially anxious expecting pain during the procedure but the nurses are very thorough in explaining about the procedure and they related the experience of some patients who had undergone this procedure with no medications. This relieves my anxiety. I did not feel anything more than what you expect in an invasive procedure. The intravenous needle stick is more painful than my colonoscopy. The warm water inside me has a soothing feeling during the procedure. I am glad to know that I have a favorable result with my colonoscopy and I only need to have a repeat in a decade. I am willing to have a repeat examination with no sedation. I encouraged everybody to undergo colonoscopy with no sedation and it was the best decision I made."

Mr. E, another patient who had unsedated colonoscopy as part of the on-demand sedation colonoscopy study and received water colonoscopy. "I echo the experience of the last gentleman. I had a colonoscopy some time ago with sedation and I lost the whole day recovering from the medication. I was told I had polyps from my last colonoscopy. Recently I had a repeat colonoscopy examination with no sedation I had a little bit discomfort but no real pain. I got up after procedure with no problems. I was able to drive home after a big breakfast with my wife. I learned afterwards that I had water colonoscopy. I am willing to have a repeat examination and recommend it to anyone with no sedation as long as water is used."

Mr. P, a patient of Dr. Mann who had an unsedated colonoscopy last year. "I am a gastroenterology nurse for 29 years and have assisted with many colonoscopies. I had a colonoscopy last year and I asked Dr. Mann to have it done with no sedation. I have no intravenous line established at the time. Fortunately I have a healthy abdomen and a healthy colon. It was simple and there was no pain involved. I went into the procedure with the understanding that there will be air insufflation and distension of the sigmoid and that was the only discomfort I experienced. Dr. Mann was able to get to the cecum with water, and there was no distension and no discomfort. On the way back, of course she had to insufflate the colon with air and therefore I had a few cramps. There was no discomfort whatsoever, and the gas was easily passed. I was awake for the rest of the day and enjoyed myself. Therefore, I am a strong advocate for unsedated colonoscopy."

References

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