
Executive summary

Health Council of the Netherlands. Population Screening Act: national population screening programme for bowel cancer. The Hague: Health Council of the Netherlands, 2013; publication no. 2013/19.

In September 2013 the gradual introduction of a screening program for colorectal cancer will start, first with a limited pilot and then nationwide. On February 28, 2013, within the context of the Population Screening Act (WBO), the Minister of Health asked the Health Council for advice on the license for this national population based screening programme.

A national screening programme is complex. Even with all the efforts by all concerned parties it is impossible to set up an optimal programme and execute it perfectly all at once. The Committee takes this into account in the report and also that the programme will have to develop over time. Crucially, the participants in the program should not run unnecessary risks and should be well informed about these risks.

The Committee concludes that the design of the screening program for colorectal cancer largely meets the requirements of the WBO and that it is consistent with the conditions the Health Council formulated in 2009. Only some parts need adjustments, so judges the Committee. This involves additional measures to monitor the quality of colonoscopy and CT-colonography and changes in the provisions for information given to participants. Furthermore, there should be a provision for complaints implemented for bowel cancer screening. These recommendations are in addition to the recommendations that the committee has done in April 2013

The Committee advises the Minister to grant a license for a period of six years under these conditions. According to the schedule after six years all age-groups will have been invited. The Committee believes that would be a good time to evaluate the screening programme.