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FAECAL OCCULT BLOOD TESTING ON INPATIENTS

CEASING FAECAL OCCULT BLOOD (FOB) TESTING ON INPATIENTS AT ST VINCENTS PUBLIC HOSPITAL

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SUMMARY: From July 2024, Faecal Occult Blood (FOB) testing will not be available for inpatients and ED patients at St Vincent's Public Hospital. If there is consideration of blood loss from the gastro-intestinal system a consult with the gastroenterology department is recommended.

RATIONALE: FOB testing is a validated tool for screening for bowel cancer in the general population within defined age ranges. Outside this specific indication the test has major limitations which may lead to false negative or false positive results. Specifically using this test to identify or exclude acute gastrointestinal haemorrhage is not appropriate nor to perform bowel cancer screening on hospital inpatients.

This action is part of the "Choosing Wisely" campaign of the Gastroenterology Society of Australia and is Supported by the Gastroenterology Department at SVH.

LIMITATIONS OF FOB TESTING FOR SYMPTOMATIC PATIENTS OR ACUTE CARE PATIENTS

- Does not detect upper GI bleeding
- False positives from drugs (e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin, NOACs, SSRIs)
- False positives after digital rectal examination, bowel surgery
- False negatives from intermittent bleeding
- FOB testing may delay relevant referral/consultation
- Positive or negative results are a poor indicator of pathology
- Follow-up investigations may be time-consuming and expensive

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https://www.choosingwisely.org.au/recommendations/gesa

SELECTED RELEVANT LITERATURE

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