

LPCA's Data-Driven Approach to Closing Cancer Screening Gaps

Confronting Louisiana's Cancer Alley and Advancing Health Equity Through Preventive Care

Stakeholder collaboration and data-driven care are critical to improving healthcare in under-resourced communities. The industry witnesses the shortfalls continuously—from nearly half of low-income U.S. adults skipping medical care to rural communities lacking access to emergency services, maternity care, or specialty treatment.

Yet when a foundation of shared data underpins decision-making across community, public health, and provider organizations, there is hope for improving the outlook. This was true for an 85-mile stretch between the Louisiana cities of Baton Rouge and New Orleans, known nationally as Cancer Alley, where stakeholders successfully addressed access to care challenges such as cost, transportation, and trust.

Home to more than 200 petrochemical plants and refineries, the region represents one of the densest concentrations of industrial effluence in the Western Hemisphere. The area with the highest risk of cancer in the U.S.—more than seven times the national average—is also home to predominantly Black and low-income communities where residents face ongoing respiratory and cancer risks far above national averages.

Focused interventions by Federally Qualified Health Centers supported by the Louisiana Primary Care Association (LPCA) are changing the dynamics related to colorectal cancer and improving the health trajectory of the region. Through a shared data infrastructure, organizations are drawing from a single source to better coordinate patient care and get ahead of disease progression. These targeted insights are driving measurable improvements in health outcomes—from screening rates to closing care gaps.



Colorectal Cancer Challenge: The Power of Connectivity

There was good reason to target colorectal cancer (CRC). Not only does Louisiana consistently record higher incidence and mortality rates than the national average, but regular screenings can identify pre-cancerous polyps or early cancers where survival rates can exceed 90%.

The challenge was completing screenings amid persistent care challenges, such as unstable housing, food insecurity, and lack of transportation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, individuals with lower income are significantly more likely to face social drivers of health issues which may contribute to lower screening rates, delayed diagnoses, and worse outcomes.

In addition, traditional and often fragmented methods of engaging patients, such as manual calls, emails, and mailed reminders, limited LPCA's effectiveness with outreach. To overcome the challenge of outdated legacy and EHR systems, LPCA turned to Azara Healthcare's DRVS population health management platform to bring key stakeholder data together by integrating clinical, health plan, and social risk factor data. Combined with user-friendly automation tools, the solution provided the basis for identifying and stratifying high-risk patients and designing evidence-based outreach strategies tailored to individual needs.

A year-over-year look at CRC screening trends in Cancer Alley reveals significant progress. Overall, LPCA has seen a 6% improvement in colorectal cancer screening rates across all populations.

LPCA's Impact on Colorectal Cancer Screening

Year-over-Year Improvements (2023-2024)



15.7% increase in colorectal cancer screenings among individuals experiencing food insecurity



12% increase in screenings among individuals lacking reliable transportation



9% increase in screenings among individuals experiencing homelessness



6% overall improvement in colorectal cancer screening rates across LPCA-supported health centers

Improving clinical outcomes with data-driven care

While Cancer Alley reflects complex economic and environmental challenges, its future can be reshaped through technology-enabled, collaborative approaches to preventive care. This replicable model can inform efforts in other safety-net communities to not only close cancer screening gaps but also address other high-risk conditions. It's a step forward toward achieving better health outcomes for populations who historically have had limited access to healthcare.

Learn more about how Azara Healthcare can support your organization by exploring the resources available in the DRVS Help section, contacting the Azara support team, or reaching out to your client success manager.

