

Follow-Up on Abnormal Cancer Screening Test Results

The Problem:

Failure to follow up on abnormal test results and resultant delays in diagnosis is a major safety (as well as risk-management) issue that is gaining increased attention. Many barriers for adequate follow-up have been described, including lack of a reminder system, difficulty accessing results, competing demands on time, and uncertainty about who should follow up on results.

Aim/Goal:

To provide timely and appropriate follow up on abnormal cancer screening test results, including mammography, pap smear and FOBT.

The Team:

- Gila Kriegel, MD, HCA, Director of Quality Improvement
- Russell Phillips, MD, General Medicine - Chief
- Edna Moody, IS, Programmer
- Laura Scribner, IS, Programmer
- Joanne Schulze, Medicine, QI Project Coordinator
- Naama Neeman, MSc, Medicine, QI Specialist
- Mark D. Aronson, MD, Medicine, Vice Chair for Quality

The Interventions:

An existing paper-based system that had been developed by the Division of General Medicine to track abnormal results of cancer screening tests by manual review was refined to address the above mention barriers for adequate follow up.

The Results / Progress to Date:

The implementation of this system resulted in the attainment of 100% follow-up on abnormal Pap smear; fecal occult blood test and mammography

HCA Follow Up on Abnormal Results - 2007											
Month	Average time (days following an alert) until 1st action taken				Range (days following an alert) until 1st action taken				Action taken within 30 Days		
	Cytology	Radiology	FOB	Total	Cytology	Radiology	FOB	Total	Cytology	Radiology	FOB
Apr. 07	na	8.7	5.5	8.2	na	0-30	2-14	0-30			
May 07	3	9.0	na	4.7	0-3	0-30	na	0-30			
Jun. 07	na	10.0	7.4	9.5	na	0-30	0-30	0-30			
Q2 Total	3	9.2	6.5		0-3	0-30	0-30	0-30	100%	100%	100%
Jul. 07	0	15	0	12.0	0-0	0-30	0-0	0-30			
Au. 07	0	7	1	11.0	0-0	0-30	0-4	0-30			
Sep. 07	0	10	16	11.2	0-0	0-30	0-30	0-30			
Q3 Total	0	10.5	6		0-0	0-30	0-30	0-30	100%	100%	100%

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next:

A group of clinicians at BIDMC, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Vanguard are currently working in collaboration to develop a new computer-based system that will track follow-up of tests, check for documentation of follow-up, and remind physicians when follow-up was not completed. With the new electronic system, we expect to maintain a 100% follow up on cancer screening tests, in a safe, reliable and efficient manner.



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