The Problem
Health care is becoming more of a value-based system and as a result, radiologists need to increase their visibility and role in clinical medicine. Within the field of breast radiology, staff routinely communicate all results of diagnostic exams with a patient directly, at the conclusion of the study. However, biopsy results are typically communicated to the patient by the referring clinician. Given the breast radiologists understanding of the management of a wide array of pathologic results, perhaps patients would prefer to hear results directly from the clinician performing the biopsy, which would increase radiologist visibility and perceived value.

Aim/Goal
1) To evaluate patient understanding of the breast radiologist and their role in breast care.
2) To evaluate from whom patients want to hear biopsy results, and with what mode of communication.
3) To understand if the interaction between the patient and the radiologist impacted the patient’s perception of the breast radiologist, and the desired method of communication.

The Team
1) Breast Imagers: Jordana Phillips, MD, Hannah Perry, MD, MS, Vandana M. Dialani, MD, Valerie J. Fein-Zachary, MD, Evguenia Karimova, MD, Priscilla J. Slanetz, MD, MPH, Shambhavi Venkataraman, MD, Richard E. Sharpe JR, MD, MBA, Tejas S. Mehta, MD, MPH
2) Breast Imaging Technologists and Technical Assistants
3) Breast Imaging Nurse Practitioner: Nancy Littlehale, NP

The Interventions
For this quality assurance study, an anonymous 2-part survey was given to patients to complete before and after undergoing either an ultrasound-guided core biopsy or a stereotactic biopsy. The survey was created using SurveyMonkey®. Patient information gathered through the survey included data on demographics, familiarity with the BIDMC breast imaging department, and the patient’s pre- and post-biopsy understanding of what a breast radiologist is and their role in breast care. Patients were also asked from whom they wanted to hear their biopsy results and with what method. Initial data collection took place during March 2015-October 2015.

The Results/Progress to Date
A total of 155/572 (27%) patients completed both portions of the survey.

Lessons Learned
Only 27% of eligible patients completed the survey. Among patients who responded, fewer than 60% knew that a breast radiologist is a physician, but 95% felt that the breast radiologist was essential to their care. This suggests lack of understanding of the breast radiologist, and is an opportunity for patient education. Regardless of the pathology, patients want to hear biopsy results from whoever will call soonest, followed by the ordering provider. In both groups, patients preferred to receive results communication by phone.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next
We will provide patient education on what a breast radiologist is and their role in breast health. We will also begin surveying referring physicians to evaluate their preferences regarding biopsy result communication. We will use this data to inform future practice change.

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