

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BY CLOSING THE LOOP

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Category: Communication

Background

While there are multiple initiatives on provider to patient communication at Texas Children's Hospital, there is limited focus on provider to provider communication. This project focuses on closing one aspect of the communication loop between specialty and primary care providers.

Objectives

To improve communication between specialty and primary care providers by increasing the rate of referral notes sent at Texas Children's Hospital within 48 hours of a completed office visit.

Methods

This project began as a pilot at Texas Children's Hospital in The Woodlands. A general survey of PCP preferences on frequency and detail of communication drove future interventions. Specialty providers were educated on PCP preferences which included full visit notes after new and return visits within 48 hours. Second, a live demonstration for specialty providers in The Woodlands outlined best practices for generating and sending referral notes to PCPs. Third, an email was disseminated to the providers with detailed referral note instructions. Fourth, front desk staff were educated to verify PCP accuracy at check in. Finally a pilot with Primary Care Sports Medicine providers implemented an auto-route feature within EPIC to generate and send notes following every patient encounter.

Results

Approximately 70% of Sports Medicine visits from January - September 2017 had a referral note sent, with 50% sent within 48 hours. After auto-route referral note implementation from November - December 2017, 98.5% of visits had a referral note generated and 71.5% were sent within 48 hours. System-wide for 2017, only 65% of all office visits had a referral note sent and 50% were sent within 48 hours.

Discussion

Communication among providers is critical for the continuity, safety and quality of patient care. This project began as a small pilot at Texas Children's Hospital-The Woodlands but has grown system-wide. As part of the TCH Access Initiative a uniform template and process for auto-routing referral notes is being generated to ensure timely and thorough communication between specialty and primary care providers system-wide.