

Reduction in patients length of stay in hospitals as a result of timely follow up of radiology studies

As the transition towards value-based imaging continues, today's radiologists face new challenges. Besides closely supervising and improving clinical quality to ensure each patient's safety, radiologists are also tasked with evaluating patient results and reporting on outcome measures: Meanwhile, despite all these additional tasks, the radiologist must continue to optimize his or her own productivity level ensuring everything is completed in a timely manner.

Timely Follow-Up of Radiology Studies Can Reduce a Patient's Length of Stay

- When it comes to health care expenses, inpatient care totals nearly one-third of all costs.
- According to research, to decrease a patient's length of stay (LOS), as well as to reduce hospital mortality rates and re-admissions, focus must be placed on efficiency.
- With easy-to-use software, a well-trained staff and efficient daily practices, the radiology department can directly impact a patient's LOS.
- Timely follow-up studies can decrease the amount of time a patient remains in the hospital.

Preventable Medical Errors

A series of reports released by the Institute of Medicine recognizes the flaws in the nation's healthcare systems. These reports make it clear that delays in obtaining a diagnosis and diagnostic errors have both resulted in patient deaths that could have been prevented.

The American Medical Association's 10-Year Review

The results of a 10-year review of patient safety and research that was conducted by the American Medical Association finds up to 70 percent of the recommendations made for follow-up imaging tests because of incidental radiology findings are disregarded. Since follow-up testing was never completed, many of these patients will eventually receive delayed diagnoses.

The Importance of Follow-Up Imaging Tests

Although the majority of nodules seen in radiology tests are benign, some of them do represent an early form of cancer; therefore, encouraging patients to have their follow-up imaging tests as recommended is essential. The reality is, that when caught in the early stages, many cancers are treatable.

Consider that:

- While approximately 10 percent of all the radiology studies performed recommend that the patient has a follow-up imaging test, at least 5 percent of these follow-up tests are never conducted.
- For a hospital or imaging center that performs 700,000 of these tests annually, the disregarded follow-ups

total about 35,000.

- Besides the hospital or imaging center's revenue loss for those 35,000 missed tests, the patients' lives may be at risk due to delayed and/or missed diagnoses: For this reason alone, these issues cannot be ignored.

Dr. Ben Wandtke is the Chief of Diagnostic Imaging and President of the Medical Staff at FF Thompson Hospital, which is part of the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC).

Dr. Wandtke says that follow-up imaging offers a chance to improve the lives of patients and increase the number of people who survive after a cancer diagnosis. He states that, "Due to gaps in communication, patients have fallen through the cracks. The difference between a stage 1 cancer diagnosis and a stage 4 diagnosis can be a 50% survival impact. Despite advances in cancer care, treating late stage cancer is more costly and less effective than an early diagnosis."

Addressing Failed Follow-Ups

Increased workloads being placed on radiology teams have already led to an overwhelming amount of extra work. Therefore, radiologists and their teams need an answer for addressing failed follow-ups efficiently, without adding any additional work or disrupting their everyday workflow.

Radiologists Need Powerful Tools That Support Improved Outcomes

Unfortunately, data is unable to single-handedly provide the support that radiologists and their teams need as they transition to value-based imaging.

- Radiologists need powerful tools that are specifically designed to obtain, group, evaluate and then accurately report on the data that was analyzed as well as keep

track of physician recommendations to ensure the patient returns for his or her follow-up imaging test.

- The answer to this problem is the Nuance mPower Clinical Analytics and PowerScribe Follow-up Manager. This revolutionary software offers private practices and hospitals a way to provide comprehensive, follow-up recommendation, care-plan tracking.
- With automated, collaborative system-based solutions, radiologists and their teams can help improve patient care, reduce liability as well as generate new opportunities for revenue.
- The Nuance PowerScribe Follow-up Manager uses natural language processing (NLP) to automatically capture recommendations, then track those recommendations and manage their follow-up activities.
- Today, using Nuance's innovative software, the University of Rochester tracks 500 recommendations every month, with 91 percent of these recommendations being satisfactorily closed; thus, effectively reducing their delayed diagnosis risk by 80 percent.

By taking advantage of the revolutionary software that Nuance offers, hospitals, private practices and imaging centers can provide patients with faster results. Once the radiologist and the radiology team begin using the Nuance software, patients who are hospitalized may receive their follow-up results much sooner; thus, potentially reducing their overall LOS.