Quality Initiative to Improve Breast Cancer Screening Rates in a Family Medicine Clinic

Hannah Siel, MD
Department of Family Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, NE 68198
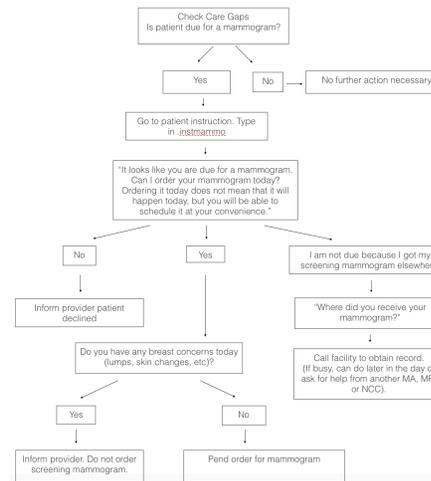
Background

Breast cancer screening is designed to detect breast cancer when it is still curable to decrease mortality. Breast cancer screening is commonly performed with mammography, supplemental digital breast tomosynthesis, ultrasounds, or breast MRI. Studies have shown that serial screening with mammography is the most effective method to detect early disease and decrease mortality. The DOC Family Medicine Clinic utilizes the Care Gaps function of the Epic EMR to determine and flag providers if a patient is due for breast cancer screening. The current institutional goal for breast cancer screening at Nebraska Medicine is greater than or equal to 80%. Prior to initiation of this quality improvement initiative, the DOC Family Medicine Clinic had a breast cancer screening rate of 56%.

Methods

- An algorithm was developed to be utilized by the medical assistants rooming the patients to pend screening mammograms for providers to sign.
- The Care Gaps function of the EHR was utilized to determine which of these patients were due for breast cancer screening.
- Nebraska Medicine's Care Gaps function flags women as due for breast cancer screening if they are aged 45 - 70 and have not had a mammogram in the last two years.
- The initiative was discussed at a monthly all staff meeting.
- An email was also sent out to explain changes to all clinic staff.
- The project was started in March 2020. Unfortunately, shortly after it began it was paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was formally restarted in December 2020.

Algorithm

Results

Discussion

Various factors have thus far impacted the outcome of the initiative including:

1. Initiative was paused for around 9 months

2. Mammograms were not performed for two months in 2020.

3. The clinic switched to predominately telehealth visits for several weeks

4. Healthcare hesitancy due to fear of exposure to Covid-19

5. The initiative is ongoing

Conclusion and Future Directions

The initiative thus far has not shown any improvement in breast cancer screening rates in the DOC Family Medicine Clinic. The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted breast cancer screening rates through various avenues. As the initiative was formally restarted in December 2020, there is still more data and information to gather on if the initiative will be successful.

References

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