Avoidable Imaging Learning Collaborative:

Words that work: How to communicate to patients about diagnostic imaging

CT Utilization: Speaking With Radiologists
Presenters

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Words that work: How to communicate to patients about diagnostic imaging

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• 35yo M presents to primary care clinic with history of low back pain for 2 weeks, requesting MRI of spine
• Mother presents with 6-year son who fell in the school playground and hit his head on the pavement – nurse advised going to ED to get a CT scan
What are your choices?

• Give in to your patient’s request
• Take a hard line with your patient
• Negotiate some sort of compromise
• Any other options?
What are patients’ concerns

- Fear and anxiety about a worst-case scenario
- Prompts from within the medical system (and from elsewhere)
- Sunk-cost theory of healthcare
- Desire for concern to be taken seriously
Validation

Reassurance
Key words to try using

- “Tell me more about your concern ...”
- “I’m very reassured that ...”
- “In my experience, ...”
- “I’d like to spare you from having to ...”
- “Here’s what I propose we do ...”
- “Does this sound reasonable to you?”
Some words to avoid

• “Not indicated” / “Not appropriate”
• “Your symptoms don’t meet our criteria for getting an MRI ...”
• “I don’t know why they thought you needed a CT scan in the first place ...”
• “I can order an MRI, but it’s going to be a long wait, and you may end up having to pay out of pocket...”
An evolution in thinking ...

1990’s → 2016

“Customer Service”
“Patient Satisfaction”
“Patient-Provider Engagement”
CT UTILIZATION: SPEAKING WITH RADIOLOGIST

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AGENDA

Background
Project Overview
Speaking With Radiologists
Summary
Questions
CASE STUDY

Management Fellow Charged with Influencing Provider Practice Behavior and Decreasing Variation
PROJECT OVERVIEW

EM Physicians Discussion
Radiology Department Discussion
Data Collection
Intervention
Data Collection #2
# RESULTS

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RESULTS

Variation > CT Utilization
Minor head injury defined with the following ICD-9 codes: 800.xx-804.xx, 850.xx, 854.xx, & 959.01

Hospitals are ranked by CT rate
Analyses weighted by number of discharged patients per hospital

Significant head injury defined using the following ICD-9 codes: 851.xx through 853.xx

Hospitals are ranked by CT rate in patients with minor head injury discharged from the ED

WHAT DRIVES THE RADIOLOGIST?

Drivers:
- Group Finances
- Hospital Finances
- Radiation
- Benefit/Risk
- Technology
FOCUS ON THE COMMON GROUND: QUALITY
CHALLENGES

Ultrasound Technology
Evidence Disagreement
Tradition
Pediatric Patients
Autonomy
TAKE HOME POINTS

Variation > CT Utilization
Focus on Common Ground
Test of Change on Disagreements
QUESTIONS

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Avoidable Imaging Webinar:
Thursday, October 27th
1:00pm-2:00pm EST

ACEP E-QUAL Network Resources and More Information:
www.acep.org/equal

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